The Paris Review

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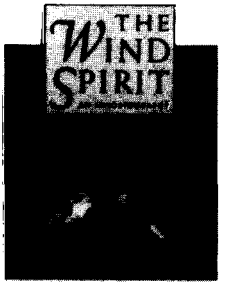

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It was a Thursday when I lifted the phone and called my agent. I said, "Gabe, I'm going to be sixty-six tomorrow, Friday, January 13, 1978, and I've been writing fiction all my life and no one's ever published a word of it and I'd give my left pinkie to get into *The Paris Review*." And I did because Gabriel was interested at once and told me that he'd get in touch with me the next day because he thought he might find a buyer. He did. . . . When my story came out, I went to Dr. Dodypol and had the finger removed surgically and under anesthesia. His head nurse, Kate Crackernuts, wrapped the finger in cotton bandages and in red tissue paper with a yellow ribbon around it and I walked out a published author and weighing three ounces less than when I walked in.

—Dallas Wiebe, "Night Flight to Stockholm," Issue 73

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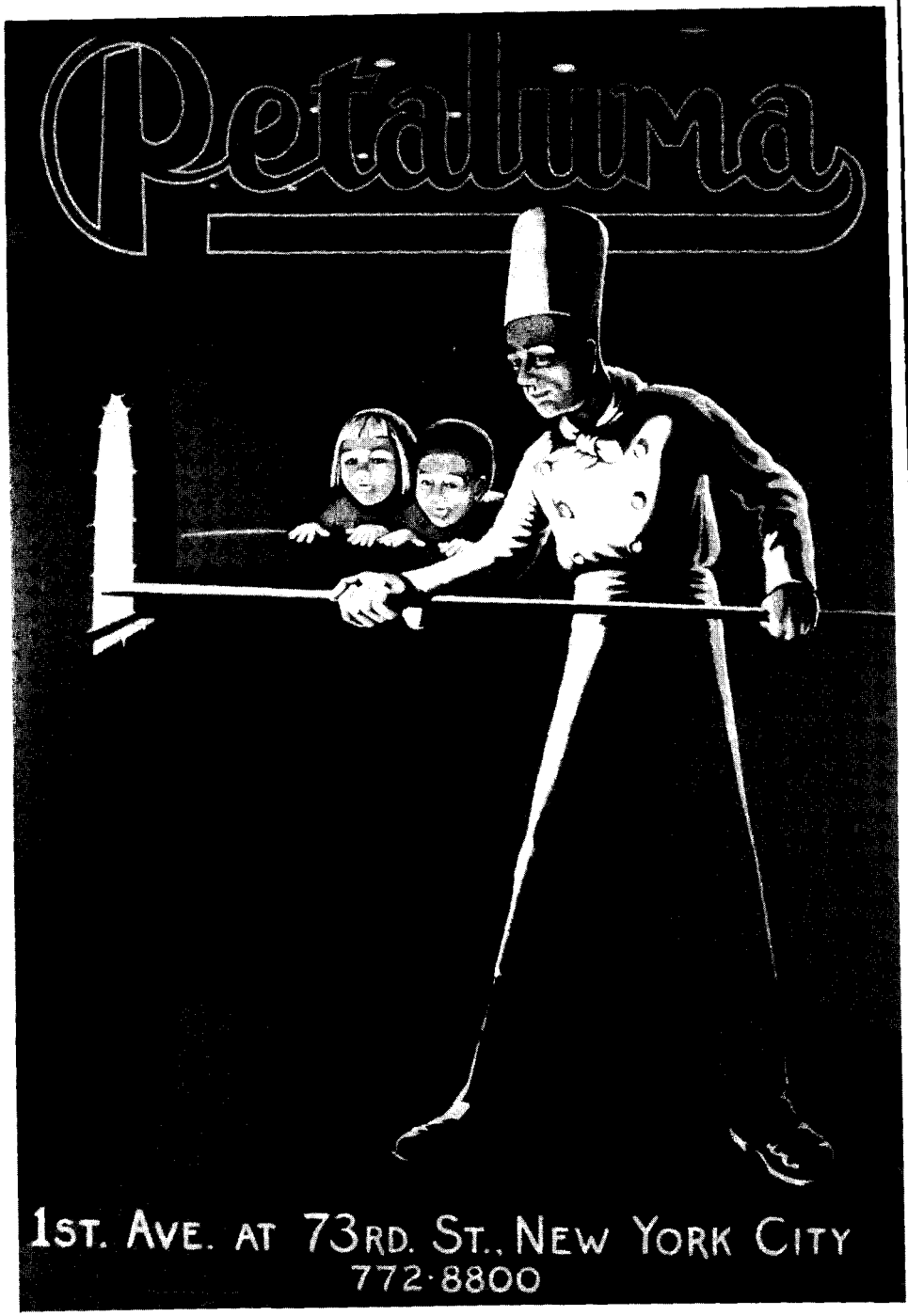

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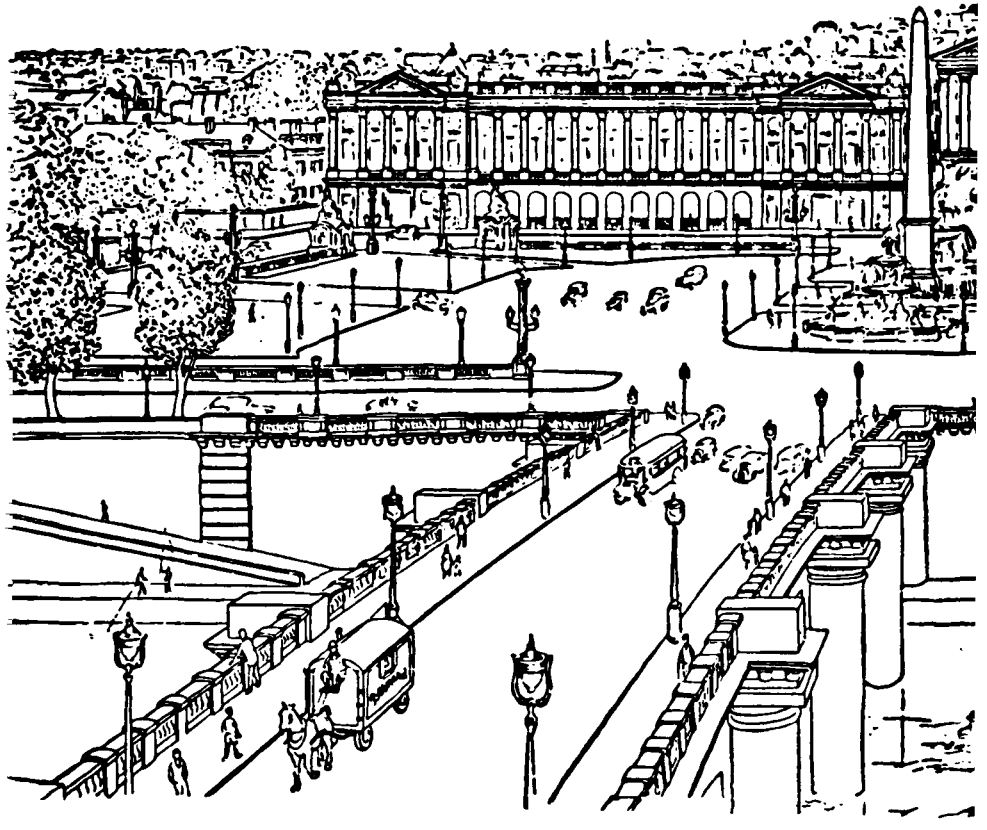

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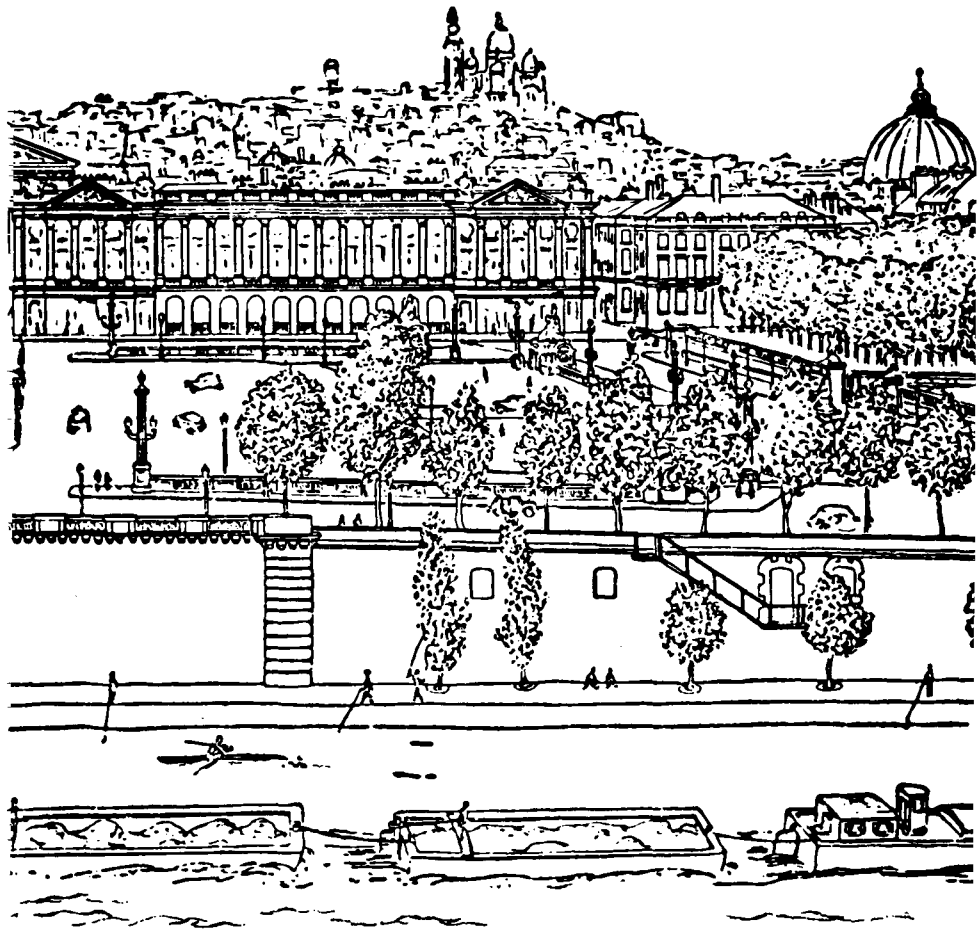

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Car-Crash While Hitchhiking

Denis Johnson

A salesman who shared his liquor and steered while sleeping . . . A Cherokee filled with bourbon . . . A VW no more than a bubble of hashish fumes, captained by a college student . . .

And a family from Marshalltown who head-onned and killed forever a man driving west out of Bethany, Missouri . . .

. . . I rose up sopping wet from sleeping under the pouring rain, and something less than conscious, thanks to the first three of the people I've already named—the salesman and the Indian and the student—all of whom had given me drugs. At the head of the entrance ramp I waited without hope of a ride. What was the point, even, of rolling up my sleeping bag when I was too wet to be let into anybody's car? I draped it around me like a cape. The downpour raked the asphalt and gurgled in the ruts. My thoughts zoomed pitifully. The traveling salesman had fed me pills that made the linings of my veins feel scraped-out. My jaw ached. I knew every raindrop by its name.

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I sensed everything before it happened. I knew a certain Oldsmobile would stop for me even before it slowed, and by the sweet voices of the family inside of it I knew we'd have an accident in the storm.

I didn't care. They said they'd take me all the way.

The man and the wife put the little girl up front with them, and left the baby in back with me and my dripping bed-roll. "I'm not taking you anywhere very fast," the man said. "I've got my wife and babies here, that's why."

You are the ones, I thought. And I piled my sleeping bag against the left-hand door and slept across it, not caring whether I lived or died. The baby slept free on the seat beside me. He was about nine months old.

. . . But before any of this, that afternoon, the salesman and I had swept down into Kansas City in his luxury car. We'd developed a dangerous cynical camaraderie beginning in Texas, where he'd taken me on. We ate up his bottle of amphetamines, and every so often we pulled off the interstate and bought another pint of Canadian Club and a sack of ice. His car had cylindrical glass-holders attached to either door, and a white, leathery interior. He said he'd take me home to stay overnight with his family, but first he wanted to stop and see a woman he knew.

Under midwestern clouds like great gray brains we left the super highway with a drifting sensation and entered Kansas City's rush hour with a sensation of running aground. As soon as we slowed down, all the magic of travelling together burned away. He went on and on about his girlfriend. "I like this girl, I think I love this girl—but I've got two kids and a wife, and there's certain obligations there. And on top of everything else, I love my wife. I'm gifted with love. I love my kids. I love all my relatives." As he kept on, I felt jilted and sad: "I have a boat, a little sixteen-footer. I have two cars. There's room in the backyard for a swimming pool." He found his girlfriend at work. She ran a furniture store, and I lost him there.

The clouds stayed the same until night. Then, in the dark, I didn't see the storm gathering. The driver of the Volkswagen, a college man, the one who stoked my head with all the hash-

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ish, let me out beyond the city limits just as it began to rain. Never mind the speed I'd been taking, I was too overcome to stand up. I lay out in the grass off the exit ramp and woke in the middle of a puddle that had filled up around me.

And later, as I've said, I slept in the back seat while the Oldsmobile—the family from Marshalltown—splashed along through the rain. And yet I dreamed I was looking right through my eyelids, and my pulse marked off the seconds of time. The interstate through western Missouri was, in that era, nothing more than a two-way road, most of it. When a semi-truck came toward us and passed going the other way, we were lost in a blinding spray and a warfare of noises such as you get being towed through an automatic car wash. The wipers stood up and lay down across the windshield without much effect. I was exhausted, and after an hour I slept more deeply.

I'd known all along exactly what was going to happen. But the man and his wife woke me up later, denying it viciously.

"Oh—*no*!"

"NO!"

I was thrown against the back of their seat so hard that it broke. I commenced bouncing back and forth. A liquid which I knew right away was human blood flew around the car and rained down on my head. When it was over I was in the back seat again, just as I had been. I raised up and looked around. Our headlights had gone out. The radiator was hissing steadily. Beyond that, I didn't hear a thing. As far as I could tell, I was the only one conscious. As my eyes adjusted I saw that the baby was lying on its back beside me as if nothing had happened. Its eyes were open and it was feeling its cheeks with its little hands.

In a minute the driver, who'd been slumped over the wheel, sat up and peered over at us. His face was smashed and dark with blood. It made my teeth hurt to look at him—but when he spoke, it didn't sound as if any of his teeth were broken.

"What happened?"

"We had a wreck," he said.

"The baby's okay," I said, although I had no idea how the baby was.

He turned to his wife.

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"Janice," he said. "Janice, Janice!"

"Is she okay?"

"She's dead!" he said, shaking her angrily.

"No she's not." I was ready to deny everything myself now.

Their little girl was alive, but knocked out. She whimpered in her sleep. But the man went on shaking his wife.

"Janice!" he hollered.

His wife moaned.

"She's not dead," I said, clambering from their car and running away.

"She won't wake up," I heard him say.

I was standing out here in the night, with the baby, for some reason, in my arms. It must have still been raining, but I remember nothing about the weather. We'd collided with another car on what I now perceived was a two-lane bridge. The water beneath us was invisible in the dark.

Moving toward the other car I began to hear rasping, metallic snores. Somebody was flung halfway out the passenger door, which was open, in the posture of one hanging from a trapeze by his ankles. The car had been broadsided, smashed so flat that no room was left inside of it even for this person's legs, to say nothing of a driver or any other passengers. I just walked right on past.

Headlights were coming from far off. I made for the head of the bridge, waving them to stop with one arm, and clutching the baby to my shoulder with the other.

It was a big semi, grinding its gears as it decelerated. The driver rolled down his window and I shouted up at him. "There's a wreck. Go for help."

"I can't turn around here," he said.

He let me and the baby up on the passenger side, and we just sat there in the cab, looking at the wreckage in his headlights.

"Is everybody dead?" he asked.

"I can't tell who is and who isn't," I admitted.

He poured himself a cup of coffee from a thermos and switched off all but his parking lights.

"What time is it?"

"Oh, it's around quarter after three," he said.

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By his manner he seemed to endorse the idea of not doing anything about this. I was relieved and tearful. I'd thought something was required of me, but I hadn't wanted to find out what it was.

When another car showed, coming the opposite direction, I thought I should talk to them. "Can you keep the baby?" I asked the truck driver.

"You'd better hang on to him," the driver said. "It's a boy, isn't it?"

"Well, I think so," I said.

The man hanging out of the wrecked car was still alive as I passed, and I stopped, grown a little more used to the idea now of how really badly broken he was, and made sure there was nothing I could do. He was snoring loudly and rudely. His blood bubbled out of his mouth with every breath. He wouldn't be taking many more. I knew that, but he didn't, and therefore I looked down into the great pity of a person's life on this earth. I don't mean that we all end up dead, that's not the great pity. I mean that he couldn't tell me what he was dreaming, and I couldn't tell him what was real.

Before too long there were cars backed up for a ways at either end of the bridge, and headlights giving a night-game atmosphere to the steaming rubble, and ambulances and cop cars nudging through so that the air pulsed with color. I didn't talk to anyone. My secret was that in this short while I had gone from being the president of this tragedy to being a faceless onlooker at a gory wreck. At some point an officer learned that I was one of the passengers, and took my statement. I don't remember any of this, except that he told me, "Put out your cigarette." We paused in our conversation to watch the dying man being loaded into the ambulance. He was still alive, still dreaming obscenely. The blood ran off of him in strings. His knees jerked and his head rattled.

There was nothing wrong with me, and I hadn't seen anything, but the policeman had to question me and take me to the hospital anyway. The word came over his car radio that the man was now dead, just as we came under the awning of the Emergency Room entrance.

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I stood in a tiled corridor with my wet sleeping bag bunched against the wall beside me, talking to a man from the local funeral home.

The doctor stopped to tell me I'd better have an X-ray.

"No."

"Now would be the time. If something turns up later . . ."

"There's nothing wrong with me."

Down the hall came the wife. She was glorious, burning. She didn't know yet that her husband was dead. We knew. That's what gave her such power over us. The doctor took her into a room with a desk at the end of the hall, and from under the closed door a slab of brilliance radiated as if, by some stupendous process, diamonds were being incinerated in there. What a pair of lungs! She shrieked as I imagined an eagle would shriek. It felt wonderful to be alive to hear it! I've gone looking for that feeling everywhere.

"There's nothing wrong with me"—I'm surprised I let those words out. But it's always been my tendency to lie to doctors, as if good health consisted only of the ability to fool them.

Some years later, one time when I was admitted to the detox at Seattle General Hospital, I took the same tack.

"Are you hearing unusual sounds or voices?" the doctor asked.

"Help us, oh God, it hurts," the boxes of cotton screamed.

"Not exactly," I said.

"Not exactly," he said. "Now what does that mean?"

"I'm not ready to go into all that," I said. A yellow bird fluttered close to my face, and my muscles grabbed. Now I was flopping like a fish. When I squeezed shut my eyes, hot tears exploded from the sockets. When I opened them, I was on my stomach.

"How did the room get so white?" I asked.

A beautiful nurse was touching my skin. "These are vitamins," she said, and drove the needle in.

It was raining. Gigantic ferns leaned over us. The forest drifted down a hill. I could hear a creek rushing down among rocks. And you, you ridiculous people, you expect me to help you.

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Federico García Lorca

Night

Suite for Piano & Poet's Voice

Translator's Note: As a type of "serial poetry," the Lorca "suites" were written between the end of 1920 and the middle of 1923. Many remained unpublished during Lorca's lifetime and were later reassembled from notebooks, notably in André Belamich's critical edition, Suites *(Editorial Ariel, Barcelona, 1983). When I first attended to the several that had surfaced earlier, they struck me as a different kind of Lorca poetry than I had known before—still characteristically his but with a coolness and occasional quirkiness, a playfulness of mind and music that I found instantly attractive. The translations of the suites will appear in the second volume of a comprehensive edition of Lorca's poetry, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux under the general editorship of Christopher Maurer.*

—Jerome Rothenberg

Sketches

That road
got no people.
That road.

That weevil
got no home.
That weevil.

And this crawfish
gone to sleep.
This crawfish.

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Prelude

The bullock
slowly
shuts his eyes.

Heat in the stable.
Prelude to
the night.

In a Corner of the Sky

The old
star
shuts her bleary eyes.

The new
star
wants to paint the night
blue.

(In the fir trees on the mountain:
fireflies.)

The Whole Works

The wind's hand
caresses the forehead of space
again &
again.

The stars half close
their blue eyelids
again &
again.

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A Star

There is a tranquil star,
a star that has no eyelids.
—Where?
—A star . . .
In sleepy water
In the pond.

Swath

O St. James Road.
O Milky Way.
(O night of love for me
when yellow bird was painted
painted
painted
up in the lemon tree.)

One

That romantic star
(one for magnolia,
one for the roses).

That romantic star
just went crazy.

Tralalee,
tralala.

(Sing, little frog,
in your shadowy
hut.)

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Ursa Major

Bear mother
gives suck to the stars
astride her belly:
Grunt
grunt.
Run off, star babies:
tender little stars.

Memory

Our Lady Moon still hidden,
playing ring around a wheel.
She makes herself look silly.
Loony moon.

At the Poorhouse

And the poor stars
that have no light
—o sorrow,
sorrow,
o lamentation!—
end up stuck
in muddy blue.

O sorrow,
sorrow,
o lamentation!

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Comet

There on Sirius
are babes.

Venus

Open sesame
by day.
Shut sesame
at night.

Below

Space & stars
reflected into sound.
Liana ghosts.
Harp labyrinths.

The Great Sadness

You can't look at yourself
in the ocean.
Your looks fall apart
like tendrils of light.
Night on earth.

—translated from the Spanish
by Jerome Rothenberg

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Jorie Graham

Spring

When I caught sight of them, the secret lovers,
I had been watching the pink-edged white blossoms
in the garden below
fall, once in a great while, off the black-limbed cherry.
Watching one petal start the slow drift over
then blow off sideways a while then stutter
down of a sudden to the wet black soil.

Poppies in a bathtub. Glistening lettuces.
Seven white irises along the far wall.

They were heading along the steep chalky road
that bothers this green hill all the way down,
late afternoon sun laying their shadows out, sharp, long,
sometimes running a bit,
onto the white dirt.

Earlier rain. Then suddenly sun.
Wings to every bud, every latched-on sucker.
Each thing swaying from its tight home.
And turning, and opening, because so held.
Spring.
The green stain spread.

I had been watching—between the lettuce and the small
hydrangea—how the white cat sits
perfectly still
tracking the shadows of the quick birds above her—
and once saw her spring as if from sleep and not miss—
flurry of white—

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then the quick head shaking the neck of the thing.
  All afternoon me leaning and watching.
All afternoon her watching the shadows

  flitting crazy over the greens that break them.
She never looks up.
  Hunts wholly by shadow.
Time and the opening in it.
  As if I have no place really,

  as if there is nowhere to go.
Sounds rising up now and then from the valley—
  a hammering,
intermittently a dog.
  Shadows of other terraces. Birds diving to feed.

When I caught sight of them they were near me,
  a two-faced machine of gripping
arms,
  him tucking her hair round her ear as they talked.
There was orange blossom, honeysuckle, in what we all

breathed.
  And buzzing in the evening air of small bugs lingering.
And cries where children behind the wall were playing.
  On the steps across the street a teacup of flour.
Three mismatched linen napkins folded below it.
  And sun on the steps.
And heat the steps can keep awhile.

  There's the cat which is still, which doesn't look at anything.
  There's the ladder still up in the tree they've found—
though the pruning's long done—There are its prongs—
  it's a long one—sprung out the topmost leaves

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—two stiff antennae nothing can twitch—
There's the feeding on up of the non-

existent rungs.
Now they're at the foot of it in a shady patch.
I know it's not my place to watch.
And what is poetry to do now?
What is it going to keep in life that life is ready
to shake off, sleek now,
starved?
It wants to stick to the skin of the beast
(there's singing to the radio out an empty window)

it wants to stick to the skin of the beast as it shakes.
I can see them so I shouldn't look.
They have lain her purple coat beneath them.
They have lain their red and blue umbrella down
beside them.
He has lain himself down over her and in his wrists

holds her face still for a long time.
The shadows are longer they are all pointing.
My shadow is stretched across the parapet and down.
It reaches across the road below.
If I stand here, right at the edge, my long pale shadow
reaches them,
my shoulders move where their arms move—

I wait and they are all inside it.
I wait. Wait. We are all waiting now.
The shadows of the birds play over us.
Everything is choked with being to the quick beat called
stillness.
I close my eyes to feel the strange

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slice over me
feeding.
The washing from the windowline above?
The back of the mind?
The event crossing flapping its wings?
Something is creeping over them down there.
Something grey and filled with minutes is laying itself
down over them.
Something without meaning all beginning is smudging the
green where their limbs lie and taking the whole story up,

a wave, making the whole love fit into its body,
until it is not a randomness anymore the large darkness
with a head to it,
until they're a white hole in it, opening and shutting in it,
until it is *the feel of the place as they know it* they think,
it's what the air feels like now, what being is,
it's not a matter anymore of where it comes from, not any
more a question of
how long it will stay. It stays. It stays.

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Pamela White Hadas

Rara Avis

One Easter, the last chords of our closing hymn
still buzzing in the upright strings of the Hope Church
School
piano, our black-robed pastor, fresh from his sermon,
surprised us all, swooshing in with a hamper full
of new-hatched chicks. Each child would be allowed
to choose, from the twittering mass of fluff, one chick
to fondle, to feather the Day's text: life renewed.

Our parents willing, we could keep our pet. How pick
just one? I did not want my choice to be
haphazard. Unable, I watched 'til almost none
remained. They all looked alike to me, save one—
a runt, uniquely placid, attentively shy.

My brother got a lively one, bright-eyed—undistinguished.
Mine's eye said it knew I knew; it snuggled, cherished.

We set our chicks down in the garden, to give them a taste
of freedom—no coop or cage or ulterior
motives. My father's grain mill would donate its best
cracked corn; they'd grow to roam the slope, back door
to lake, groom grass and drink as they liked. My chick
seemed slow to grasp such luck. Meanwhile her brother
hopped circles around her, beak busy with dirt. I took
my charge up gently, went indoors to ask my father,
a part-time vet, was she sick, should I be worried?

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One eye on the ballgame, his thumb and finger held,
stroked down the palmed limp bird, now gasping,
glaze-eyed,
"Kiddo, you've got a short-ender here, a set up.

You want me to help?" I nodded. With a tender snap—
like iced twigs or wishbones make—my chick left the field.

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Two Poems by Charles Tomlinson

Along The Mohawk

The child floats out his Indian cry
Across the river. Where did the Mohawks go to?
It arrives with the breath of mudflats as we pass by
Down the disused railroad's asphalted avenue.

What is it the fishers who crouch at the river bends
Hope to hook from this discolored water?
A rabbit, scenting our approach, pretends
As it freezes in the brush, to exist no more.

You can hear the swish of the cars beyond
The far-bank trees: the even wavelets sway
Up to muddy margins: a docile pond
The river appears, no longer a waterway—

Way of the Algonquin as they came down,
Silently scaled the unmanned stockade,
Dropped into the streets and razed the town,
And the cries of victor and victim carried

Up the river reaches and along these shores
To where a rabbit crouches against invaders
And a railroad, silenced by the swish of cars,
Is the pathway fishers follow across this glade.

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Apples Painted

He presses the brush-tip. What he wants
  Is weight such as the blind might feel
Cupping these roundnesses. The ooze
  Takes a shapely turn as thought
Steadies it into touch—touch
  That is the mind moving, enlightened carnality.
He must find them out anew, the shapes
  And the spaces in between them—all that dropped from view
As the bitten apple staled on unseen.
  All this he must do with a brush? All this
With a brush, a touch, a thought—
  Till the time-filled forms are ripening in their places,
And he sees the painted fruit still loading the tree,
  And the gate stands open in complicity at his return
To a garden beneath the apple boughs' tremulous sway.

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Brian Swann

Exist

As a kid I never thought of "pain" as
something I felt. What I felt I could not
name or share. Now out the window I watch
a thin chemical yellow smear being
pushed down by gray rolls of night. Behind me
the physics of the TV screen

Plays out plots and previews. Outside is shapes
moving under neon like those who have
already moved on. Lighted windows stick
in the sky, independent of stone or
brick. I can only exist in writing,
when for a while I do not know

I exist. I exist only when I
don't exist? There I am at the window,
staring back at me, in glass, dependent
on the dark. In a room beyond this one,
I see myself in replicas that come,
go with light, most there when most dark.

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me,had wetted me thoroughly,and the sleety downpour of the November night--it was All Souls' night, I now recall-- had completed a terrible drenching.Could I avoid a cold by huddling under Father Time's ample blue cloak?

He lifted his arm invitingly,and I stepped forward --but only to recoil at once,in horror.For under Time's cloak I saw the faces of all the Massey people who were no longer with us:my dear friend Bill Broughall,the college lawyer;Austin Thompson, who was the most genial of financial advisors;Lionel Massey, who died so early in his history, who took such delight in it;Vincent Bladen,dean of arts and sciences and a strong College friend;Gordon Wry, who used to arrange delightful music for us on such occasions as these;Ron Thom, our architect,who believed so devoutly and so truly that architectural surroundings influenced the people who lived in his buildings,either for good or evil,and who so strongly for the good.And several faces I saw there, of Junior Fellows who had died too young;there were young Africans there, who had been killed in the bloody disputes of Nigeria, and whom I remembered with respect and affection;some who had died of what are so strangely called natural causes, but which seem so unnatural in the young ;there was one who had died,unhappily,by his own hand.And others; too many.

'Come alomg' said Time.'I have them all safely in my cloak,and there is plenty of room for you'.

'Not yet', said I.'The wet and cold are not so bad as I had thought'.

'Have it your own way', said Time, and dropped his cloak.

'You never spoke a truer word than that', said his daughter.'And never forget it when you think you have cause to complain.

'But Father Time', said I;'there was one face I missed,which I should dearly like to see again.Wasn't Vincent Massey somewhere beneath your cloak?'

'Indeed he was', said Time.'Didn't you see him?'

'I did not', said I.'But--no,no, the request is too bold--still,let me ask: could you, do you think, allow him to re-visit this College that meant so much to him.It was here, I think, that he

A Robertson Davies manuscript page, from a ghost story composed for the twenty-fifth anniversary of Massey College, University of Toronto.

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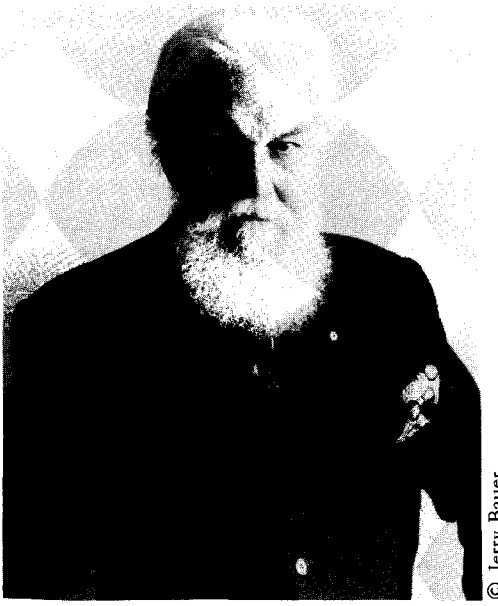

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The Art of Fiction CVII
Robertson Davies

When we met in the autumn of 1986 to conduct this interview in front of an audience at the 92nd Street YMHA in New York, Robertson Davies was already famous not only as a novelist, critic, and man of letters but as a compelling performer of literature: his readings and lectures were always given to sold-out houses. The robust presence of this "wizard of the North" (characteristically he was as gratified to inherit this title from Walter Scott as he was amused that few people any longer knew where it came from) came as no surprise: a filled-out broad-chested figure, clad in slightly old-fashioned clothes

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(that evening he wore his signature leather waistcoat, all the better looking for age, beneath a well-cut jacket), with an easy, erect carriage, a deep, skillfully-modulated voice, fine straight nose, luxuriant white beard and hair.

"The introducer has approached me by what may be called the biographical path," Davies once wrote. "He begins by telling that I was born, and when, and where. As soon as he mentions the date of my birth I can see the audience doing a little sum in their heads, after which they look at me with renewed interest to see how I am carrying the burden of my years. He is all kindness; he romps through the public details of my life, but under the circumstances I cannot laugh or weep."

Voilà. Mr. Davies was born in 1913 in Ontario and educated in Canada and at Balliol College, Oxford. He worked at the Old Vic as writer, teacher of drama history, and actor; it was there that he worked with Tyrone Guthrie, and there that he met his wife whom he married in 1940. Upon his return to Canada, Davies embarked on a career as a kind of one-man Canadian cultural center, embassy, and gadfly; apparently he had little difficulty doing several full-time jobs at once, as well as writing plays and novels, stories, lectures, and critical essays. In 1942 he became editorial writer for the Peterborough, Ontario, Examiner; *he was the paper's editor and publisher from 1946 until 1963. He also wrote a column under the pseudonym of Samuel Marchbanks, as well as other reviews and criticism.*

During the 1950s, Davies's first novels—the three that are now called the Salterton Trilogy—were published; he became literary editor of a publication called Saturday Night, *for which he wrote book reviews; he was elected to the board of governors of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, a position he held until 1971; and with Guthrie he documented, in three books, the festival's activities in its initial years. In 1959 he began another newspaper column—"Writer's Diary"—in the* Toronto Daily Star.

In 1963, Davies moved to Massey College at the University of Toronto as Master, a position that kept him at the center of Canadian academic life until his retirement in 1981. Mean-

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*while, he composed the novels of the Deptford Trilogy (*Fifth Business, The Manticore *and* World of Wonders*) and the first book of a third trilogy,* Rebel Angels. *Since his retirement, the best-selling* What's Bred in the Bone *and* The Lyre of Orpheus *have completed this threesome.*

Throughout these years, in countless lectures, articles, and public appearances, Mr. Davies continually urged upon his sometimes unwilling, unready, or unable countrymen the delights, rewards, and indispensable glories of art. "What does Canada expect from her writers?" he asked. "Canada expects nothing from her writers. But what may *Canada expect from her writers? She may reasonably expect what other countries get from a national literature. First a sense of national character. Second, vigilance on behalf of intellectual freedom and moral vigor. Last, we may expect a true depiction of the essence of what our life in Canada is." And what kind of literature is that? "Works with completely irrefutable power to convince," he continued, "works that cause the reader to be visited, dimly, briefly, by revelations such as cannot be produced by rational thinking. Works in which you can see not yourself but, for one second, the Inaccessible. Ah, but to have glimpsed the Inaccessible is, however imperfectly, to have gained access to it. That is what your writers can give you, if you want it, and let them know that you want it. The decision rests with you."*

INTERVIEWER

You've just returned from a triumphant trip to Scandinavia and also to London. In the past you've remarked that the British view of "colonial" writers was not as generous as it might be. How was it this time?

ROBERTSON DAVIES

Well, it was a mingled greeting. A great many people were extremely kind and friendly, and of course the more informed British—that is, roughly ten per cent of the population—no longer regard Canadians as colonials. But some do, and one or two quite influential reviewers made it very, very clear that

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they expect little from Canada. One of the strangest experiences that I've had as an author was some years ago when a novel of mine was reviewed in the *Times* of London, and reviewed very favorably. But the review began with these chilling words: "To speak of a good novel from a Canadian writer sounds like the beginning of a bad joke." With friends like that, who needs enemies?

INTERVIEWER

This travel must be gratifying, but surely it takes time and energy away from your writing, and you've told me that life has been very hectic since you retired from Massey College in 1981. How do you manage all these public engagements?

DAVIES

It's difficult to manage public engagements particularly when you're retired. When people ask me what I'm doing, I have to tell them that I'm doing very much what I did before I retired, except that now I have secretarial assistance only one day a week. People deluge me with things to be done and when I say I am busy, they fall into extravagant mirth and shout—"You can't be busy, you're *retired!*" I have been wasting my time doing things which seem to be imperative without being in the least important. I think you know that it is very unfortunate for a writer to spend too much time jaunting about talking, for although that is flattering, and it is delightful to appear before audiences and to meet people directly in this way, you really ought to be home working at your desk. Quite honestly, if you wanted to, you could as a writer spend twelve months of the year at conferences, pep groups and ginger sessions, talking to students and doing all kinds of things except your proper work. You just simply have to get down to it. Meanwhile, I have sat in a sort of pen at the Booksellers' Fair, autographing copies of bound proofs for supposedly eager booksellers, and otherwise making myself a motley to the view, as Shakespeare, who knew all about it, says. My publishers are anxious that I should rush about and talk to people, but I have laid down a few ground rules: I *will not* drive wildly

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fifty miles at dawn in order to breakfast with fourteen librarians in a cellar somewhere, nor will I speak to schools. My agent is anxious that I should be on something called *The Today Show*, which is apparently big magic, but I daren't tell him I have never heard of it. I recall once being "cased" by one of Dick Cavett's underlings to see if I would be any good on his show, but I was found unworthy. Ah, if all this brouhaha had happened thirty years ago, when I had energy and appetite for it! As I once said of George Bernard Shaw, he bloomed at twenty, but nobody smelled him till he was forty. My scent has been even later in catching the breeze. The BBC also wanted a film about me for its *Authors and Places* series, so I had to hie me to the beautiful old city of Kingston where I grew up—a very beautiful Loyalist place, full of domes and towers and looking altogether more like Bath than a place on this continent—and revive my childhood and youth for the camera. Great fun; we had horses, and soldiers, and all sorts of gaudy delights. And the weather was good to us.

INTERVIEWER

What are you working on now? Or do you resist being asked this?

DAVIES

No, no. I am at the moment winding up to write another novel, and when I say "winding up" I mean I am making notes and plans and perpetually building up what I will eventually write: that is the way I work. I make very, very careful plans and a great many notes—so many notes indeed that sometimes they are as long or longer than the eventual book. And sketches of characters and suggestions and references to things that will be useful. All that takes a long time. Getting to work on a new novel is a dismal business, for the beginnings never seem to get any easier with the passing of time. I toil like a swimmer who feels himself about to sink beneath the waves at any moment. Like all my novels, this one began with quite a simple idea, but as I work on it a mass of complexities assert themselves, and I have to struggle to keep from being over-

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whelmed by extraneous detail. But then—at least the way I work—when you begin to write, you can write quite briskly because you have done all the preparatory work beforehand. I hope it turns out well. But with novels, like cakes, you never know. Even when I finish a book, I'm never sure whether it is good or rubbish. This new one has a few characters of marked oddity, some explorations of realms of knowledge not visited by everybody, and a view of life and people that is decidedly unsentimental, though not wanting in pity. My books come in threes, and though not really trilogies or series, they are linked by characters and a point of view. But they are tedious about chronology: *What's Bred in the Bone* leaps backward in time from *Rebel Angels*, and this third book—its name is *The Lyre of Orpheus*—moves forward in time. If I *planned* them, this would not happen, but I don't: they just occur.

INTERVIEWER

What gets you started? Do you start with the characters, with a situation, with a dramatic kernel of something? In the actual drafting of the text, do you start at the beginning and go right to the end?

DAVIES

The kernel is something that recurs to me over and over and over again, that will not be escaped and that I realize finally is demanding to be written about. It may be either a picture in my mind of something happening, or an idea of something that might conceivably come about. If it is appreciably insistent, I eventually know that it must take the form of a novel and I must get busy on it. The book forces itself into my mind when I am lugging furniture, or pulling weeds, and I have hopes of it. I often read, with amazement, of people who suffer from writer's block; I might enjoy a wee block, just to have time to catch my breath. I find in the initial, discovery stage that a great deal of other matter which is supportive to the kernel idea has also been building up. That's when the note-taking begins, and it moves quite rapidly. For instance, I did not write *Fifth Business* until ten years had passed since

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I first became aware of the idea that lay behind it: it was simply a scene that kept occurring in my mind, which was of two boys on a village street on a winter night—I knew from the look of the atmosphere that it must be just around Christmastime—and one boy threw a snowball at the other boy. Well, that was all there was to it, but it came so often and was so insistent that I had to ask myself, Why is that boy doing that and what is behind this and what is going on? Then the story emerged quite rapidly.

INTERVIEWER

When you saw those boys on the snowy street, was it a generalized Canadian street or was it a specific locale?

DAVIES

It was the street on which I was born in a Canadian village, and it was right outside my own house. But you see, it was not anything directly associated with my own childhood because the boys were ten, eleven, twelve years old and I left that village when I was five.

INTERVIEWER

Is it in the note-taking or in the actual writing that the characters take on their own life, or does this occur earlier?

DAVIES

Well, you see, I hesitate to talk about this, because it sounds mystical and perhaps rather absurd, but I assure you it is not: the minute I recognized that the picture meant something I should pay attention to, the whole thing began to come to life, and I knew who the boys were and I knew what the situation was and I quickly became aware of what lay behind it. Some of it had to be invented, some of it had to be fetched up and rejected—a great deal is rejected in the course of such work—but it was all there as soon as I began to work. And when I began writing, I wrote from the beginning to the end as I always do. I know that many writers—Joyce Cary for instance—compose the principal scenes of a novel before putting the

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connective work around it; other people work backward and do all sort of interesting things, but I don't. I just go from start to finish, and that's the first draft.

INTERVIEWER

A number of writers who similarly go from start to finish find that their novels change enormously as they are written, surprising their creators. Have you had that experience?

DAVIES

I do know the story when I begin, but I don't know how it's going to end. I know about two-thirds of it, and then the end emerges as I go on. I shrink from saying this, but I've agreed to come here and talk about it, and it's true: I hear the story, I am told the story, I record the story. I don't pretend that some remarkable person somewere else is whispering in my ear, or that a beautiful lady in a diaphanous garment is telling me what I should write. It is just a part of my own creative process which I am not immediately in touch with and certainly not in full control of. And so the story emerges. There can be no two ways about how it's going to end. It just ends the way it's going to end. I don't think that that is very mysterious, for if the story is any good, it must have an inevitability, although some critics dispute that. They say they're full of coincidence and this, that or the other; but the fact is that my life seems to be much fuller of coincidence and curious happenings than the lives of critics. What I mean is, the kind of mind which makes a critic is analytical, cool, an infinitely, unenviably, cautious mind. A recent piece of professorial criticism of *What's Bred in the Bone* was very severe with me for my attraction to arcane lore and weird belief—no use explaining that to me the arcane lore isn't arcane at all, and makes wonderful sense, and that almost all belief is strange, if you catch it with the light falling on it in a certain way. I wish professorial critics, who often write so dully, would give me the credit for a minimum of wits, and stop elevating themselves as the standard by which all belief and understanding should

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be measured! What sort of books would Balzac and Dickens have written if they had listened to such stuff?

INTERVIEWER

You once wrote, "All the critics in this town are the bastard children of Scotch parents."

DAVIES

Yes, critics have this nanny quality, but they vary enormously. Some are friendly and kindly, and are interested in your work and take it seriously, but the ones who get under my skin are the academic critics whose whole training is to detect faults. They call them "flaws." I call them "flawyers," which they do not like. I one time nailed one of these people and said, "Tell me of a novel that you know that is free from flaw. Now how about *War and Peace*?" "Oh, infinitely flawed." "What about *Remembrance of Things Past*, Proust's great novel?" "Oh, a mass of flaws." I think it would be splendid if we could get a committee of these wonderful people to write a flawless novel, but they won't do it and I question whether it would reach publication. The opposite sin is the creation of meaning or intent where none was planned. A Ph.D. candidate wrote of *World of Wonders* that its hero was christened Paul, and that his life story exactly paralleled that of Saint Paul! I said mildly that this had not occurred to me. He replied, with an indulgent smile, that many things appear to the critical reader of a book which have eluded the attention of the author, and that this gave the book "resonance"—for me, the resonance of a dull thud. It is extremely disagreeable to be treated as a sort of *idiot savant* who must be explained to himself and to his readers.

INTERVIEWER

Now, the requisite *Paris Review* question: How do you write your novels? In your instance, this is a more interesting question than usual because you have an extraordinarily beautiful italic hand. Do you write the first draft of your novel longhand or do you type?

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DAVIES

I type because writing by hand I find to be a very great betrayer. If you write carefully and try to write legibly, as I do, you finish a page and think, That's a handsome page. This is absolutely wrong. Also, you can only write so long with a pen before your hand becomes tired, and then your invention begins to tire. If you type, which I do because I had my earliest training as a newspaperman and learned to use the typewriter readily, you have what you've written there before you cold and bare. Then you can go over it, and it is as though someone else had written it and you can edit it with great severity. I am a terrible fidget about *form*, and the first typed draft is often pitifully ragged and messy. But then after it goes to my secretary, who makes a clean copy, I revise extensively. The heavy work is done, but I like revising. As for editing, though I try to be stringent, you will recall that I resist your editor-like zeal for total clarity—all the lights blazing and not a dark corner to be found. I am a writer much given to light and shade, and I firmly believe that to know all is to despise all.

INTERVIEWER

I want to ask about your early newspaper experience. Your father owned and edited a newspaper, and you became well-acquainted not only with the typewriter but with the entire printing process—the linotype machines, the presses, the distribution network. How has your knowledge of the way a work of art is mechanically reproduced and distributed to the public influenced your sense of your own writing?

DAVIES

It's influenced my writing immeasurably more than I could possibly define. When I was a boy, my father was a newspaperman, my two brothers were newspapermen, my mother was intensely interested in newspaper work, and I heard newspaper talk at every meal. In a newspaper family you learn not only all the news that's fit to print, but all the news that is *not* fit to print and you acquire an insight into human nature and

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the essence of a community which is very hard to acquire, I think, in any other way. I was the editor of a newspaper for twenty years. During that time I had to deal with not only the recorded news, but the news I knew about which might be supportive of the recorded news but some of which could not possibly be printed because it was so extraordinarily damaging and often wounding. You find out what people are like, and how they live, and what they're up to at night, and what goes on behind the lace curtains. The world you report is rarely more than half the world you know.

INTERVIEWER

Presumably you also learn something about people's interest in these matters and how they respond to news.

DAVIES

Yes, and how disagreeably they gloat over the misfortunes of their neighbors, and how they wince and scream when some folly of their own has to be reported in the paper. Oh, you can find out a lot about people running a newspaper.

INTERVIEWER

Are these responses which you anticipate or play upon in your work as a novelist?

DAVIES

Yes. As a newspaper editor you have to sit there in your office and listen to the knock on the door and know that some angry, offended person is going to come in and tell you about something which you never thought would have offended an angel in heaven.

INTERVIEWER

You have combined novel-writing not only with newspaper work but also with academic work. You just spoke rather scathingly about academics. Those run-of-the-mill academics you were talking about can't have been entirely happy when you

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showed up in the halls of Massey College at the University of Toronto. You must have been a rather exotic bird compared to many of them. How did it go?

DAVIES

It went extremely well. When I speak harshly of academics, I am speaking about less than fifty percent of them. Most of my academic friends are marvelous people, and it was a great pleasure to work with them and to talk with them and to hear their opinions about everything. So it was wonderful to join them, and I greatly enjoyed teaching. I liked the association with students and I liked the association with my colleagues. Not all of my colleagues, of course, took the same view I did of the kind of work I did. A few of them felt that I was a blackleg because I should have been criticizing, and I was writing.

INTERVIEWER

What is a blackleg?

DAVIES

A blackleg? A blackleg is a scab. It's an old term and perhaps one not familiar in the United States, but it's a common English expression. I should explain to your audiences by the way, that I am not English, whatever appearances there may be to the contrary. I am the usual Canadian cocktail—Welsh, Scots, quite a bit of Dutch, a dash of Red Indian, but no English. And all, of course, dominated by the old Empire Loyalist bias.

INTERVIEWER

Do I hear a rumble of Canadian nationalism?

DAVIES

Canadian nationalism is a very hot topic at present, and nationalism always brings a lot of idiots into prominence who cannot see beyond the ends of their noses. Of course we Canadians don't want to be eaten by the USA, but anybody with any wits knows the small countries—and we are small in

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population—must be linked with somebody, and the United States is the obvious link for us, in economic matters; as for art and literature, we are nationalist when we feel these to be in peril. I think myself lucky that in my lifetime Canadian writers have ceased to be asked by publishers in New York to change the venue of their stories to somewhere south of the border. That certainly happened to me in connection with several plays. Our independence is a dicey affair and can never be complete; who is completely independent? We just don't want to be chawed down to a nubbin.

INTERVIEWER

Hear, hear. Now what about Marchbanks, your alter ego in the newspaper column you wrote for so many years, whom you have comment that becoming a professor "would ruin one for comprehensible writing of any kind." It didn't seem to ruin you. On the contrary, your novels got better and better while you were running Massey College. Was there some kind of synergistic interplay and feedback between your work at Massey and your novel-writing?

DAVIES

No, it wasn't precisely that. When I'd been a newspaper editor, I had been engaged chiefly in writing plays. For a variety of reasons which any playwright will understand, I decided that that wasn't satisfactory and I was going to try my hand at writing novels, and I did and liked it much better.

INTERVIEWER

What did you prefer about novel-writing?

DAVIES

Anybody who has been a playwright, unless he's a playwright of well-established reputation, knows that his position in the theater is a very weak one, and that the wish of the director or some important actor infinitely outweighs his; and the opinions of the money people, who always want something that's already happened to happen again, are very im-

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portant. You're perpetually subjected to governance by people who haven't written the play and are trying to make it as much like some previous success as possible. That's very tedious and you get sick of it. When you're a novelist, you're writing a play but you're acting all the parts, you're controlling the lights and the scenery and the whole business, and it's your show. When it's done, one turns it over to the editors and they are delightfully kind about it and away you go.

INTERVIEWER

You worked for many years with Tyrone Guthrie. Do you feel that the work you did with him, or with other actors and directors—indeed your theatrical work in general—has affected your novels in any way?

DAVIES

Yes, it's affected them very strongly. I'm not in any way a devotee of realism, and the theater is never realistic, even when it's pretending to be intensely so. It is selective, the dialogue is selective, and the dialogue in the kind of plays I like best is *immensely* selective—finely polished, and arranged to convey the greatest possible amount of meaning with the least use of words. That is what I think really good dialogue ought to be. It is not a phonographic reproduction of the way people actually talk. It's the way they would talk if they had time to get down to it and refine what they wanted to say. Working with Tyrone Guthrie was interesting because he was a man of extraordinary capacity in his dealings with comedy. He had a remarkable sense of comedy, and you couldn't work with him without being infected by it. He had not, however—I don't say this in a derogatory way, because he was a dear friend of both myself and my wife—he had not a great deal of compassion and had a weak understanding of tragedy, and you need those things if you're going to be a novelist. So that had to come from somewhere else.

INTERVIEWER

Then compassion and a sense of tragedy go together, perhaps?

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DAVIES

Yes. True compassion—not just what Mark Twain called "leaky waterworks." And tragedy as purgation and exaltation.

INTERVIEWER

Many of your readers and reviewers are dazzled by how much you know about everything, by how much they can learn about so many things in your novels—some of it quite arcane and special, some of it information that perhaps we all should know but don't. Mary McCarthy once argued eloquently that the novel is among other things a conveyor of a huge amount of social and cultural, as well as psychological and philosophical, information and truth. You can learn to make strawberry jam by reading *Anna Karenina*, as she said. Do you like the idea of instructing your readers on all that lore about gypsies or cellos or art forgery or Houdini, to name a few subjects quite randomly?

DAVIES

Well, you see, the actual fact is that I don't. I say a few things, I provide a few details, but if I may be permitted to say so, I work on the Shakespearean plan. Everybody says, "Oh, Shakespeare must have been a sailor. Do you notice how in the beginning of *The Tempest* people cry, 'Man the bowsprit,' or 'Split the binnacle,' or whatever it is. He must have been a sailor." Others say, "No, no, he must have been a lawyer. Remember in *The Merchant of Venice* he has a scene in a law court that is quite like a law court." "No, no, no, Shakespeare must have been a soldier because he has a place where Henry V cries, 'Follow your spirits and upon this charge,/ Cry God, for Harry, England and Saint George.'" It's all hooey. Shakespeare had a few telling details which he injected into his plays that made them seem realistic, and I have the same in my novels. I don't know a very great deal about anything. Indeed, the areas of my ignorance are fantastic in their scope. But you know, I have one reminiscence which has a bearing on this. When I wrote *Fifth Business*, there were some scenes in it which took place in the First World War, the experiences of a Canadian soldier. I say virtually nothing about

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the war except that there was a great deal of mud, that there were a lot of horses who might panic, and that most of the time it was infinitely boring. That is all. But you know, one man said to me, "Where were you during the war?" and I said, "Well, frankly, after I got here I was in the cradle." But he had fought in France and he said that it was just like that. He asked, "How did you know it was like that?" If you have the kind of imagination a novelist needs, you have a notion of why it was like that. You do not need to write endlessly about what kind of sidearms somebody takes when he goes on a night raid and that kind of thing. That creates boredom.

INTERVIEWER

I see that, and indeed your novels are filled with the suggestive, essential detail and not the unnecessary supporting material. But they're also filled with details that I suspect you may make up. For example, in *Rebel Angels*, packing the cellos in a special poultice of horse manure to "cure" them. Do tell us. . . .

DAVIES

Well now, I'm not going to answer your question technically. I'll just put it to you: If you were going to bring a sick cello back to its full voice, how would you do it?

INTERVIEWER

That's the way I'd do it. Absolutely!

DAVIES

You ask yourself those questions and the answer asserts itself unequivocally. . . . Still, there must be a few tricky bits in my books or they wouldn't be books by me.

INTERVIEWER

There are two subjects you surely know a great deal about. One is children.

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DAVIES

Children?

INTERVIEWER

Children. Your first book was about Shakespeare's boy actors, you've written operas for children, you've taught them how to do stagework, and the childhood scenes in your novels are especially powerful. You've also said that you think great novels have a kind of "enchanter" quality. What are your notions about this kind of spellbinding magic, which, of course, children attach immediately to art?

DAVIES

My family background was Welsh, and the Welsh are very, very fond of storytelling and tend to be rather good at it. They're also fond of children, but they are not in the modern way infinitely tolerant of children. They think children need to be *taught* and they *teach* them. They teach them very often through stories. I feel that this quality of storytelling is basic to the novelist's art. Sometimes I am asked to talk to groups of students about writing, and the poor souls are filled to the brim with all the complex business about theories and types of narrative and this, that and the other. What I say to them is, "If you're a writer, a real writer, you're a descendant of those medieval storytellers who used to go into the square of a town and spread a little mat on the ground and sit on it and beat on a bowl and say, 'If you give me a copper coin I will tell you a golden tale.' If the storyteller had what it took, he collected a little group and told them a golden tale until it got to the most exciting point and then he passed the bowl again. That was the way he made his living, and if he failed to hold his audience, he was through and had to take up some other line of work. Now this is what a writer must do." I get so sick of writers who make tedious demands on their readers and expect them to bear with them through infinitely refined analyses of meaning and this, that and the other. You really must have a story and you must tell it, or people will just put the book

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down and they will find it to be one of those books, unlike the ones you sometimes read about in book reviews, that once put down is impossible to take up again.

INTERVIEWER

On the other hand, in your own book reviews you are insistent on recommending certain writers whose work is rather difficult, maybe even tiresome in patches, but well worth the effort. Surely you're not advocating merely simple stories, for after all you admire greatly some very complex and demanding writers.

DAVIES

Yes, I do, and I admire writers who are sometimes enviably self-indulgent, like Victor Hugo. Last summer, I was rereading *Les Misèrables*, and really that book has sometimes as much as ninety pages about something which just happens to interest him, a political or religious matter or something of the sort. And you think, When is he ever going to get on with the story? But the story is so good that you put up with these digressions, and also he writes so fascinatingly about his odds and ends that you can't stop.

INTERVIEWER

He's a special favorite of yours.

DAVIES

I'm very fond of Victor Hugo, and a book which I read when I was eleven years old and have reread many times through my life and admired enormously is *Notre Dame de Paris*. I wish that the people who see those many movies called *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* would read the novel. It's worth any of those movies twenty times over. Or a great nineteenth-century novelist like Balzac—infinitely enchanting. You cannot put him down. Even when he is telling you the details of rural newspaper publishing. Well, of course, that is very interesting. It absolutely grips you. You cannot stop reading Balzac. You cannot stop reading any of the great Russians. The great En-

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glish writers: Dickens more than Thackeray, but Thackeray is much finer than some people are prepared to admit. Trollope is endlessly gripping, though it's rather crunchy granola: you chomp your way resolutely through it, and it's worth it because the story is so good. It's the storyteller's quality that they have. Nabokov said that he thought that the most important element in a novelist's armory was what he called by a Russian word, *shamanstvo*. It means the enchanter-quality. The word *shaman* is familiar to everyone. The enchanter-quality, the ability to keep people wanting more, is not something which can be taught, and often it is associated with what critics call a "bad literary style," but it is irresistible. Dickens had it. Nobody praises Dickens's style, but who can resist his enchantment? *Only professors, and only some of those.*

INTERVIEWER

These are all nineteenth-century writers. Are there twentieth-century writers who have this enchanter-quality?

DAVIES

Yes, Evelyn Waugh, for instance. I think that Graham Greene has it also. A substantial number of the modern writers who have this ability tend to be either Continental or American. I think that English writing at the moment is somewhat in a trough. There aren't the writers who grip you and hold you quite as much as there were, for instance, when Evelyn Waugh was still alive. J. B. Priestley, whom so many critics put aside, had extraordinary *shamanstvo*.

INTERVIEWER

The writers whom you love or who impress you form one category; the writers whom you feel have influenced you form another. Bruce Chatwin once remarked that there were two ways of reading, reading for love and reading for plunder, in other words, reading to learn how writers accomplished certain effects, solved certain technical problems or just in general went about doing their work. That's a legitimate means of being influenced. Who are the writers who have influenced you?

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Did you become acquainted with them in your childhood or adolescence, or later on when you began writing?

DAVIES

Well, I don't know. I'm quite often asked about influences and I don't know of influences. I can't recognize them, and if I could recognize them I would be terrified that I was copying someone else and they are inimitable. The narrative energy of Dickens and Balzac, the many-layered irony of Thomas Mann—wondrous to admire and dangerous to imitate. The only influence I can think of is . . . well, there are two, and they were both encountered when I was a child. One everybody knows, and that was Daniel Defoe. I used to tell young reporters that if they wanted to learn to write magnificent newspaper English they should learn to write like Daniel Defoe. None of them did. The other writer who immensely influenced me as a child, just because I loved the story rather than the style—it was a translation—is a writer named Johann Wyss who wrote *The Swiss Family Robinson*. It is a tale of infinite enchantment, and I thought, This is the way to do it, you know. He just keeps the marvels coming and coming and coming.

INTERVIEWER

Another influence on your work that I know you've been asked a great deal about is that of Jung. Before you read Jung, you read Freud, and there are critics who say that your early work is influenced by Freud, that you can see the influence of him in the pages. Tell us about Freud first and then we'll get to Jung. How did you go from one to the other?

DAVIES

Ah, you see, when I first went to university in Canada, we had a very fine professor of psychology. He was very keen on Freud and knew very little of Jung, and he lectured us about Freud and encouraged us to read Freud, and I did. I found Freud extraordinarily fascinating and refreshing because he seemed to find answers to questions which I had asked, and

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to confirm things which I had dimly suspected. In that way he was enormously helpful and enlarging to a very young man. But as time went on, I discovered that Freud's attitude toward life was what is called in the lingo of psychoanalysis "reductive." Everything is brought down to something quite small. It is as though we were all still children, whatever age we might have reached: children weeping in the darkness for some fancied trouble of the past, or some denial in love, or misery of some sort. You can get enough of that. As I read Freud and about Freud, I discovered that there were very few people who discussed Freud without taking a fearful swipe at somebody called C. G. Jung. And I wondered, Why do they hate Jung so much? I must have a look. And so I began to read Jung and immediately became enchanted by him. I discovered that Jung was a man with whom I had far more basic sympathy than with Freud. Jung had, like myself, a country childhood. He grew up among country people, and farms, and farm animals, and quite simple people who worked on the land—instead of very cultivated Viennese neurotics. So his outlook on life was much more like the one to which I had been accustomed. Of course there was the basic fact that Freud was Jewish, and the Viennese Jewish culture gave his thought a cast which I could understand and sympathize with but not enter into. Jung was Swiss and Protestant, and I could understand his sort of world-view, and the ethical background of his thinking, more readily. Also, his disposition to regard myth and legend as feeding life and springing from life, as well as being a constant source of reference and refreshment in the living of life, seemed to me to be wonderfully enriching. I became a great devotee of Jung without ever rejecting or pooh-poohing Sigmund Freud, who is one of the great liberators of the human mind.

INTERVIEWER

And without in fact undergoing any analysis?

DAVIES

Oh, no, no, no. I didn't because of the advice Dr. Jung him-

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self gave to Laurens van der Post who went to him and said that he wished to be analyzed. Jung said, "Why do you want to be analyzed?" and van der Post said, "Well, because it is one of the great experiences of our culture in our time, and I wish to share it." Jung said, "Oh my friend, don't talk like that. When something in your life becomes wholly intolerable, come to me and I perhaps will analyze you. But don't undergo this experience simply to find out what it is like. It is too demanding, too exhausting." And though he didn't say it, it is also too hard on the bystanders. This is true. I'm sure that there are people in this audience who have been associated with someone undergoing analysis. It's rough on the standers-by. So Jung simply talked with van der Post most productively and enrichingly. That is why I would never undergo a Jungian analysis. Nothing is killing me, though I am not utterly free of neurosis and foolishness.

INTERVIEWER

What do analysts say about the analysis in *The Manticore*?

DAVIES

Ah well, that has been a source of enormous pride to me. I wrote that book with a good deal of misgiving because what I had to do, or what I was attempting to do, was to collapse a Jungian analysis—the first part of it, the Anamnesis—into about a year when it would normally take two, perhaps three years. I thought, This is very daring and I'm going to get jumped on by all the Jungians. In actual fact, the book was very well thought of in Zurich, which gave me enormous pride. But it was not, as some critics who knew nothing about it said, a kind of potted course in Jungian analysis. Certainly not. It was a way of telling the story economically.

INTERVIEWER

You were raised a Presbyterian, then confirmed an Anglican in your Oxford years. Now you talk about Christianity's failure to cope with either sex or evil—which I take to be two separate subjects?—and say that its insistence on striving to achieve per-

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fection is perhaps misplaced or wrongheaded. You've often spoken most movingly about the powerful impulses of myth and legend, and the religious impulse in human life and art. Yet sometimes you seem a Gnostic. In your writing of recent years, how does all this fit in?

DAVIES

That is something I think about a very great deal. I was certainly brought up a Presbyterian. In my childhood I acquired by heart a very valuable document which was called *The Shorter Catechism*. It was accepted by the Presbyterian Church and the Parliament of England in, I think, 1647. It contains 107 questions, the first of which is, "What is the chief end of man?" If you memorize *The Shorter Catechism* you have a kind of theological skeleton to work on. Later on this led me away from Presbyterianism, which I didn't like because of the predestination doctrine that goes with it. But that early doctrinal training still remains with me and I am grateful for it. When I became interested in Jung, I became interested in his attitude toward Christianity—which was a very honest one because he was the descendant of a long line of Lutheran pastors; so he was not an enemy of Christianity, though he recognized certain restrictions in Christianity which I think are becoming more and more apparent as the present century moves on. One is the rather meager place it seems to have for women and all that women imply. I don't mean women as adversaries or as people different from men, but women as people who have extraordinary things to contribute to the great mass of civilized thinking, feeling, and living. Unless Christianity can reconcile itself to women as it has not done up to now, I don't see how it can continue to maintain its hold over thoughtful people. As for Gnosticism, I was once accused by the chaplain of Massey College of being a Gnostic. He was very angry with me indeed. But part of being Gnostic was using your head if you wanted to achieve salvation or even a tolerable life. That is something which the Christian church tends rather to discourage. Salvation is free for everyone. The greatest idiot and yahoo can be saved, the doctrine goes, because Christ loves

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him as much as he loves Albert Einstein. I don't think that is true. I think that civilization—life—has a different place for the intelligent people who try to pull us a little further out of the primal ooze than it has for the boobs who just trot along behind, dragging on the wheels. This sort of opinion has won me the reputation of being an elitist. Behold an elitist.

INTERVIEWER

In a book of essays by Robert Louis Stevenson entitled *Men and Books* (long out of print, alas), there is an essay in which he expresses the notion that Scottish writers are more akin to North American than to English writers. Do you think that's true? As a Canadian writer, do you feel more affinity with Scottish, Celtic, or American writers than with the English?

DAVIES

Well, no. Rather disappointingly, no. I'm very interested in the writing that goes on in Scotland and indeed in all the Celtic countries and of course in Ireland. I do not respond quite so immediately and warmly to writers in the United States, because their concerns are different from mine and their approach to them is different from mine. They seem to be infinitely concerned with very subtle details of feeling and life. I find this exemplified, for instance, in many stories in *The New Yorker* where whether the family will have pumpkin pie or something else on Thanksgiving Day is a decision with infinite psychological and sexual repercussions. I take this quite seriously. I admire their subtlety—but I get so sick of it. I wish they would deal with larger themes.

INTERVIEWER

I hope you don't think *New Yorker* writers are representative of American culture across the board.

DAVIES

Perhaps not. I just see their stories every week because I've been taking the magazine forever and I haven't the wits to stop.

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INTERVIEWER

Saul Bellow once said—and was roundly criticized for it—that American writers, presumably excepting himself, fail to grapple with what he called the central human enterprise. Grappling with the essential human enterprise may be a numbing matter, but what—in the end—*is* the aim of the novelist? You once wrote to me, "I love to make people laugh but the pull is to tears." You have also said that you write comedies, yet sometimes there is a strong tragic element in your books. Certainly they all seem to be about the central human enterprise. Then I found in one of your books the statement that novelists would be wise to explain to the readers that life is a damn rum thing.

DAVIES

Yes. A fearful mingling of comedy, tragedy and melodrama, which is the stuff of so much of human experience.

INTERVIEWER

Do you write comedies or do you write tragedies?

DAVIES

I suppose I write comedies. My pull is toward comedy. And I have a very high opinion of comedy: comedy is fully as revealing in its probing of human problems as is tragedy. The thing about comedy which I greatly value is that it is infinitely harder to fake than tragedy. I have not often pulled out the *vox humana* and the *voix céleste* stops, but I know I have made quite a few people laugh, and that is not the easiest thing to do. It is extremely easy to be gloomy and to say, This is a terrible situation and everybody has got to be serious about it, and because I'm being serious about it, I am a writer of consequence.

INTERVIEWER

Nietzsche said, "Guilt is a substitute for thought."

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DAVIES

Yes, indeed it is. But to see that life is funny and not to mock or jeer at somebody's predicament, cruelly and without understanding, simply because some aspects of it are funny—that takes a bit of doing. I saw an instance today on Fifth Avenue, a situation that was either comic or tragic depending on how you want to take it. This girl was sitting there in the rain begging, and she had a big sign which said what her trouble was. It was a quite ordinary tale of betrayal and misery and this, that and the other—if it was true, and I don't know if it was true. But the person sitting in the rain looking wretched, even if she was not an honest beggar, was tragic. That someone of her age should be sitting on the sidewalk begging may mean not that she can't do something else, but that she has chosen to do that. It's tragic. You have to balance these two things against one another. Life is, as you said, a very rum thing.

—**Elisabeth Sifton**

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Portfolio

Portraits of Furniture

Judy Fiskin

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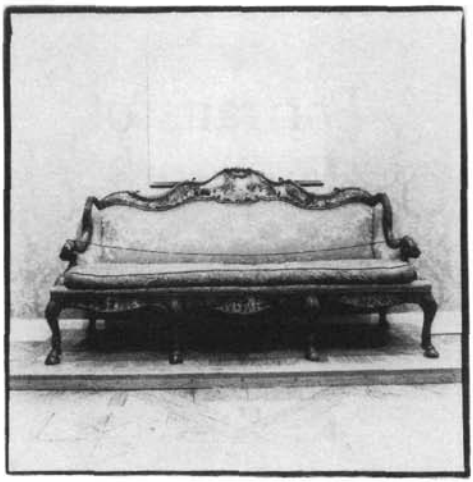

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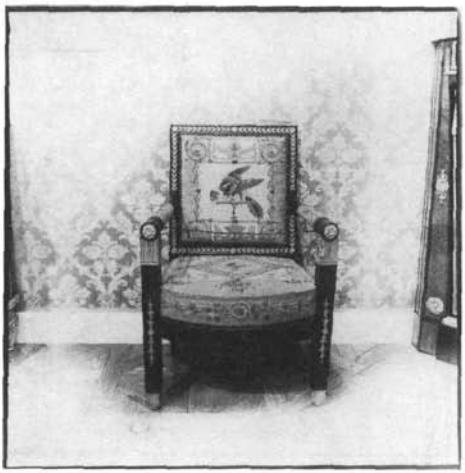

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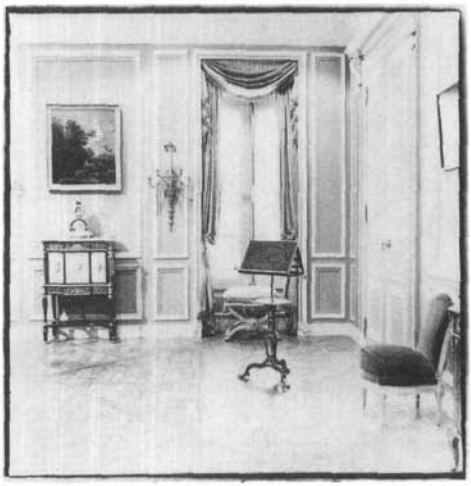

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Heat

Joyce Carol Oates

It was midsummer, the heat rippling above the macadam roads. Cicadas screaming out of the trees and the sky like pewter, glaring.

The days were the same day, like the shallow mud-brown river moving always in the same direction but so slow you couldn't see it. Except for Sunday: church in the morning, then the fat Sunday newspaper, the color comics and newsprint on your fingers.

Rhea and Rhoda Kunkel went flying on their rusted old bicycles, down the long hill toward the railroad yard, Whipple's Ice, the scrubby pastureland where dairy cows grazed. They'd stolen six dollars from their own grandmother who loved them. They were eleven years old, they were identical twins, they basked in their power.

Rhea and Rhoda Kunkel: it was always Rhea-and-Rhoda, never Rhoda-and-Rhea, I couldn't say why. You just wouldn't say the names that way. Not even the teachers at school would say them that way.

We went to see them in the funeral parlor where they were waked, we were made to. The twins in twin caskets, white,

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smooth, gleaming, perfect as plastic, with white satin lining puckered like the inside of a fancy candy box. And the waxy white lilies, and the smell of talcum powder and perfume. The room was crowded, there was only one way in and out.

Rhea and Rhoda were the same girl, they'd wanted it that way.

Only looking from one to the other could you see they were two.

The heat was gauzy, you had to push your way through like swimming. On their bicycles Rhea and Rhoda flew through it hardly noticing, from their grandmother's place on Main Street to the end of South Main where the paved road turned to gravel leaving town. That was the summer before seventh grade, when they died. Death was coming for them but they didn't know.

They thought the same thoughts sometimes at the same moment, had the same dream and went all day trying to remember it, bringing it back like something you'd be hauling out of the water on a tangled line. We watched them, we were jealous. None of us had a twin. Sometimes they were serious and sometimes, remembering, they shrieked and laughed like they were being killed. They stole things out of desks and lockers but if you caught them they'd hand them right back, it was like a game.

There were three floor fans in the funeral parlor that I could see, tall whirring fans with propellor blades turning fast to keep the warm air moving. Strange little gusts came from all directions making your eyes water. By this time Roger Whipple was arrested, taken into police custody. No one had hurt him. He would never stand trial, he was ruled mentally unfit, he would never be released from confinement.

He died there, in the state psychiatric hospital, years later, and was brought back home to be buried, the body of him I mean. His earthly remains.

Rhea and Rhoda Kunkel were buried in the same cemetery, the First Methodist. The cemetery is just a field behind the church.

In the caskets the dead girls did not look like anyone we

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knew really. They were placed on their backs with their eyes closed, and their mouths, the way you don't always in life when you're sleeping. Their faces were too small. Every eyelash showed, too perfect. Like angels everyone was saying and it was strange it was *so*. I stared and stared.

What had been done to them, the lower parts of them, didn't show in the caskets.

Roger Whipple worked for his father at Whipple's Ice. In the newspaper it stated he was nineteen, he'd gone to DeWitt Clinton until he was sixteen, my mother's friend Sadie taught there and remembered him from the special education class. A big slow sweet-faced boy with these big hands and feet, thighs like hams. A shy gentle boy with good manners and a hushed voice.

He wasn't simpleminded exactly, like the others in that class. He was watchful, he held back.

Roger Whipple in overalls squatting in the rear of his father's truck, one of his older brothers drove. There would come the sound of the truck in the driveway, the heavy block of ice smelling of cold, ice tongs over his shoulder. He was strong, round-shouldered like an older man. Never staggered or grunted. Never dropped anything. Pale washed-looking eyes lifting out of a big face, a soft mouth wanting to smile. We giggled and looked away. They said he'd never been the kind to hurt even an animal, all the Whipples swore.

Sucking ice, the cold goes straight into your jaws and deep into the bone.

People spoke of them as the Kunkel twins. Mostly nobody tried to tell them apart. Homely corkscrew-twisty girls you wouldn't know would turn up so quiet and solemn and almost beautiful, perfect little dolls' faces with the freckles powdered over, touches of rouge on the cheeks and mouths. I was tempted to whisper to them, kneeling by the coffins. Hey Rhea! Hey Rhoda! Wake *up*!

They had loud slip-sliding voices that were the same voice. They weren't shy. They were always first in line. One behind you and one in front of you and you'd better be wary of some trick. Flamey-orange hair and the bleached-out skin that goes

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with it, freckles like dirty raindrops splashed on their faces. Sharp green eyes they'd bug out until you begged them to stop.

Places meant to be serious, Rhea and Rhoda had a hard time sitting still. In church, in school, a sideways glance between them could do it. Jamming their knuckles into their mouths, choking back giggles. Sometimes laughing escaped through their fingers like steam hissing. Sometimes it came out like snorting and then none of us could hold back. The worst time was in assembly, the principal up there telling us that Miss Flagler had died, we would all miss her. Tears shining in the woman's eyes behind her goggle-glasses and one of the twins gave a breathless little snort, you could feel it like flames running down the whole row of girls, none of us could hold back.

Sometimes the word "tickle" was enough to get us going, just that word.

I never dreamt about Rhea and Rhoda so strange in their caskets sleeping out in the middle of a room where people could stare at them, shed tears and pray over them. I never dream about actual things, only things I don't know. Places I've never been, people I've never seen. Sometimes the person I am in the dream isn't me. Who it is, I don't know.

Rhea and Rhoda bounced up the drive behind Whipple's Ice. They were laughing like crazy and didn't mind the potholes jarring their teeth, or the clouds of dust. If they'd had the same dream the night before, the hot sunlight erased it entirely.

When death comes for you you sometimes know and sometimes don't.

Roger Whipple was by himself in the barn, working. Kids went down there to beg him for ice to suck or throw around or they'd tease him, not out of meanness but for something to do. It was slow, the days not changing in the summer, heat sometimes all night long. He was happy with children that age, he was that age himself in his head, sixth grade learning abilities as the newspaper stated though he could add and subtract quickly. Other kinds of arithmetic gave him trouble.

People were saying afterward he'd always been strange.

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Watchful like he was, those thick soft lips. The Whipples did wrong, to let him run loose.

They said he'd always been a good gentle boy, went to Sunday school and sat still there and never gave anybody any trouble. He collected Bible cards, he hid them away under his mattress for safekeeping. Mr. Whipple started in early, disciplining him the way you might discipline a big dog or a horse. Not letting the creature know he has any power to be himself exactly. Not giving him the opportunity to test his will.

Neighbors said the Whipples worked him like a horse in fact. The older brothers were the most merciless. And why they all wore coveralls, heavy denim and long legs on days so hot, nobody knew. The thermometer above the First Midland Bank read 98° F. on noon of that day, my mother said.

Nights afterward my mother would hug me before I went to bed. Pressing my face hard against her breasts and whispering things I didn't hear, like praying to Jesus to love and protect *her* little girl and keep *her* from harm but I didn't hear, I shut my eyes tight and endured it. Sometimes we prayed together, all of us or just my mother and me kneeling by my bed. Even then I knew she was a good mother, there was this girl she loved as her daughter that was me and loved more than that girl deserved. There was nothing I could do about it.

Mrs. Kunkel would laugh and roll her eyes over the twins. In that house they were "double trouble"—you'd hear it all the time like a joke on the radio that keeps coming back. I wonder did she pray with them too. I wonder would they let her.

In the long night you forget about the day, it's like the other side of the world. Then the sun is there, and the heat. You forget.

We were running through the field behind school, a place where people dumped things sometimes and there was a dead dog there, a collie with beautiful fur but his eyes were gone from the sockets and the maggots had got him where somebody tried to lift him with her foot and when Rhea and Rhoda saw they screamed a single scream and hid their eyes.

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They did nice things—gave their friends candy bars, nail polish, some novelty key chains they'd taken from somewhere, movie stars' pictures framed in plastic. In the movies they'd share a box of popcorn not noticing where one or the other of them left off and a girl who wasn't any sister of theirs sat.

Once they made me strip off my clothes where we'd crawled under the Kunkels' veranda. This was a large hollowed-out space where the earth dropped away at one end, you could sit without bumping your head, it was cool and smelled of dirt and stone. Rhea said all of a sudden, Strip! and Rhoda said at once, Strip!—come *on*! So it happened. They wouldn't let me out unless I took off my clothes, my shirt and shorts, yes and my panties too. Come *on* they said whispering and giggling, they were blocking the way out so I had no choice. I was scared but I was laughing too. This is to show our power over you, they said. But they stripped too just like me.

You have power over others you don't realize until you test it.

Under the Kunkels' veranda we stared at each other but we didn't touch each other. My teeth chattered because what if somebody saw us? Some boy, or Mrs. Kunkel herself? I was scared but I was happy too. Except for our faces, their face and mine, we could all be the same girl.

The Kunkel family lived in one side of a big old clapboard house by the river, you could hear the trucks rattling on the bridge, shifting their noisy gears on the hill. Mrs. Kunkel had eight children, Rhea and Rhoda were the youngest. Our mothers wondered why Mrs. Kunkel had let herself go—she had a moon-shaped pretty face but her hair was frizzed ratty, she must have weighed two hundred pounds, sweated and breathed so hard in the warm weather. They'd known her in school. Mr. Kunkel worked construction for the county. Summer evenings after work he'd be sitting on the veranda drinking beer, flicking cigarette butts out into the yard, you'd be fooled almost thinking they were fireflies. He went bare-chested in the heat, his upper body dark like stained wood. Flat little purplish nipples inside his chest hair the girls gig-

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gled to see. Mr. Kunkel teased us all, he'd mix Rhea and Rhoda up the way he'd mix the rest of us up like it was too much trouble to keep names straight.

Mr. Kunkel was in police custody, he didn't even come to the wake. Mrs. Kunkel was there in rolls of chin fat that glistened with sweat and tears, the makeup on her face was caked and discolored so you were embarrassed to look. It scared me, the way she grabbed me as soon as my parents and I came in. Hugging me against her big balloon breasts sobbing and all the strength went out of me, I couldn't push away.

The police had Mr. Kunkel, for his own good they said. He'd gone to the Whipples, though the murderer had been taken away, saying he would kill anybody he could get his hands on, the old man, the brothers. They were all responsible he said, his little girls were dead. Tear them apart with his bare hands he said but he had a tire iron.

Did it mean anything special, or was it just an accident, Rhea and Rhoda had taken six dollars from their grandmother an hour before? Because death was coming for them, it had to happen one way or another.

If you believe in God you believe that. And if you don't believe in God it's obvious.

Their grandmother lived upstairs over a shoe store downtown, an apartment looking out on Main Street. They'd bicycle down there for something to do and she'd give them grape juice or lemonade and try to keep them a while, a lonely old lady but she was nice, she was always nice to me, it was kind of nasty of Rhea and Rhoda to steal from her but they were like that. One was in the kitchen talking with her and without any plan or anything the other went to use the bathroom then slipped into her bedroom, got the money out of her purse like it was something she did every day of the week, that easy. On the stairs going down to the street Rhoda whispered to Rhea what did you *do*? knowing Rhea had done something she hadn't ought to have done but not knowing what it was or anyway how much money it was. They started in poking each other, trying to hold the giggles back until they were safe away.

On their bicycles they stood high on the pedals, coasting,

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going down the hill but not using their brakes. *What did you do! Oh what did you do!*

Rhea and Rhoda always said they could never be apart. If one didn't know exactly where the other was that one could die. Or the other could die. Or both.

Once they'd gotten some money from somewhere, they wouldn't say where, and paid for us all to go to the movies. And ice cream afterward too.

You could read the newspaper articles twice through and still not know what he did. Adults talked about it for a long time but not so we could hear. I thought probably he'd used an ice pick. Or maybe I heard somebody guess that who didn't know any more than me.

We liked it that Rhea and Rhoda had been killed, and all the stuff in the paper, and everybody talking about it, but we didn't like it that they were dead, we missed them.

Later, in tenth grade, the Kaufmann twins moved into our school district. Doris and Diane. But it wasn't the same thing.

Roger Whipple said he didn't remember any of it. Whatever he did, he didn't remember. At first everybody thought he was lying then they had to accept it as true, or true in some way, doctors from the state hospital examined him. He said over and over he hadn't done anything and he didn't remember the twins there that afternoon but he couldn't explain why their bicycles were where they were at the foot of his stairway and he couldn't explain why he'd taken a bath in the middle of the day. The Whipples admitted that wasn't a practice of Roger's or of any of them, ever, a bath in the middle of the day.

Roger Whipple was a clean boy, though. His hands always scrubbed so you actually noticed, swinging the block of ice off the truck and, inside the kitchen, helping to set it in the ice box. They said he'd go crazy if he got bits of straw under his nails from the ice house or inside his clothes. He'd been taught to shave and he shaved every morning without fail, they said the sight of the beard growing in, the scratchy feel of it, seemed to scare him.

A few years later his sister Linda told us how Roger was built like a horse. She was our age, a lot younger than him, she made

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a gesture toward her crotch so we'd know what she meant. She'd happened to see him a few times she said, by accident.

There he was squatting in the dust laughing, his head lowered watching Rhea and Rhoda circle him on their bicycles. It was a rough game where the twins saw how close they could come to hitting him, brushing him with the bike fenders and he'd lunge out not seeming to notice if his fingers hit the spokes, it was all happening so fast you maybe wouldn't feel pain. Out back of the ice house where the yard blended in with the yard of the old railroad depot next door that wasn't used any more. It was burning hot in the sun, dust rose in clouds behind the girls. Pretty soon they got bored with the game though Roger Whipple even in his heavy overalls wanted to keep going. He was red-faced with all the excitement, he was a boy who loved to laugh and didn't have much chance. Rhea said she was thirsty, she wanted some ice, so Roger Whipple scrambled right up and went to get a big bag of ice cubes!—he hadn't any more sense than that.

They sucked on the ice cubes and fooled around with them. He was panting and lolling his tongue pretending to be a dog and Rhea and Rhoda cried, Here doggie! Here doggie-doggie! tossing ice cubes at Roger Whipple he tried to catch in his mouth. That went on for a while. In the end the twins just dumped the rest of the ice onto the dirt then Roger Whipple was saying he had some secret things that belonged to his brother Eamon he could show them. Hidden under his bed mattress, would they like to see what the things were?

He wasn't one who could tell Rhea from Rhoda or Rhoda from Rhea. There was a way some of us knew, the freckles on Rhea's face were a little darker than Rhoda's, Rhea's eyes were just a little darker than Rhoda's. But you'd have to see the two side by side with no clowning around to know.

Rhea said okay, she'd like to see the secret things. She let her bike fall where she was straddling it.

Roger Whipple said he could only take one of them upstairs to his room at a time, he didn't say why.

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Okay said Rhea. Of the Kunkel twins Rhea always had to be first.

She'd been born first, she said. Weighed a pound or two more.

Roger Whipple's room was in a strange place—on the second floor of the Whipple house above an unheated storage space that had been added after the main part of the house was built. There was a way of getting to the room from the outside, up a flight of rickety wood stairs. That way Roger could get in and out of his room without going through the rest of the house. People said the Whipples had him live there like some animal, they didn't want him tramping through the house but they denied it. The room had an inside door too.

Roger Whipple weighed about one-hundred ninety pounds that day. In the hospital he swelled up like a balloon, people said, bloated from the drugs, his skin was soft and white as bread dough and his hair fell out. He was an old man when he died aged thirty-one.

Exactly why he died, the Whipples never knew. The hospital just told them his heart had stopped in his sleep.

Rhoda shaded her eyes watching her sister running up the stairs with Roger Whipple behind her and felt the first pinch of fear, that something was wrong, or was going to be wrong. She called after them in a whining voice that she wanted to come along too, she didn't want to wait down there all alone, but Rhea just called back to her to be quiet and wait her turn, so Rhoda waited, kicking at the ice cubes melting in the dirt, and after a while she got restless and shouted up to them—the door was shut, the shade on the window was drawn—saying she was going home, damn them she was sick of waiting she said and she was going home. But nobody came to the door or looked out the window, it was like the place was empty. Wasps had built one of those nests that look like mud in layers under the eaves and the only sound was wasps.

Rhoda bicycled toward the road so anybody who was watching would think she was going home, she was thinking she

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hated Rhea! hated her damn twin sister! wished she was dead and gone, God damn her! She was going home and the first thing she'd tell their mother was that Rhea had stolen six dollars from Grandma: she had it in her pocket right that moment.

The Whipple house was an old farmhouse they'd tried to modernize by putting on red asphalt siding meant to look like brick. Downstairs the rooms were big and drafty, upstairs they were small, some of them unfinished and with bare floorboards, like Roger Whipple's room which people would afterward say based on what the police said was like an animal's pen, nothing in it but a bed shoved into a corner and some furniture and boxes and things Mrs. Whipple stored there.

Of the Whipples—there were seven in the family still living at home—only Mrs. Whipple and her daughter Iris were home that afternoon. They said they hadn't heard a sound except for kids playing in the back, they swore it.

Rhoda was bent on going home and leaving Rhea behind but at the end of the driveway something made her turn her bicycle wheel back. . . so if you were watching you'd think she was just cruising around for something to do, a red-haired girl with whitish skin and freckles, skinny little body, pedaling fast, then slow, then coasting, then fast again, turning and dipping and criss-crossing her path, talking to herself as if she was angry. She hated Rhea! She was furious at Rhea! But feeling sort of scared too and sickish in the pit of her belly knowing that she and Rhea shouldn't be in two places, something might happen to one of them or to both. Some things you know.

So she pedaled back to the house. Laid her bike down in the dirt next to Rhea's. The bikes were old hand-me-downs, the kickstands were broken. But their daddy had put on new Goodyear tires for them at the start of the summer and he'd oiled them too.

You never would see just one of the twins' bicycles anywhere, you always saw both of them laid down on the ground and facing in the same direction with the pedals in about the same position.

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Rhoda peered up at the second floor of the house, the shade drawn over the window, the door still closed. She called out Rhea? Hey Rhea? starting up the stairs making a lot of noise so they'd hear her, pulling on the railing as if to break it the way a boy would. Still she was scared. But making noise like that and feeling so disgusted and mad helped her get stronger, and there was Roger Whipple with the door open staring down at her flush-faced and sweaty as if he was scared too. He seemed to have forgotten her. He was wiping his hands on his overalls. He just stared, a lemony light coming up in his eyes.

Afterward he would say he didn't remember anything—didn't remember anything. Big as a grown man but round-shouldered so it was hard to judge how tall he was, or how old. His straw-colored hair falling in his eyes and his fingers twined together as if he was praying or trying with all his strength to keep his hands still. He didn't remember anything about the twins or anything in his room or in the ice house afterward but he cried a lot, he acted scared and guilty and sorry, they decided he shouldn't be put on trial, there was no point to it.

Mrs. Whipple kept to the house afterward, never went out not even to church or grocery shopping. She died of cancer just before Roger died, she'd loved him she said, she always said none of it had been his fault really, he wasn't the kind of boy even to hurt an animal, he'd loved kittens especially and was a good sweet obedient boy and religious too and whatever happened it must have been because those girls were teasing him, he'd had a lifetime of being teased and taunted by children, his heart broken by all the abuse, and something must have snapped that day, that was all.

The Whipples were the ones, though, who called the police. Mr. Whipple found the girls' bodies back in the ice house hidden under some straw and canvas.

He found them around nine that night, with a flashlight. He knew, he said. The way Roger was acting, and the fact the Kunkel girls were missing, word had gotten out. He knew but he didn't know what he knew or what he would find. Roger taking a bath like that in the middle of the day and washing his hair too and shaving for the second time and not answering

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when his mother spoke to him, just sitting there staring at the floor as if he was listening to something no one else could hear. He knew, Mr. Whipple said. The hardest minute of his life was in the ice house lifting that canvas to see what was under it.

He took it hard too, he never recovered. He hadn't any choice but to think what a lot of people thought—it had been his fault. He was an old-time Methodist, he took all that seriously, but none of it helped him. Believed Jesus Christ was his personal savior and He never stopped loving Roger or turned His face from him and if Roger did truly repent in his heart he would be saved and they would be reunited in Heaven, all the Whipples reunited. He believed, but none of it helped in his life.

The ice house is still there but boarded up and derelict, the Whipples' ice business ended long ago. Strangers live in the house and the yard is littered with rusting hulks of cars and pickup trucks. Some Whipples live scattered around the county but none in town. The old train depot is still there too.

After I'd been married some years I got involved with this man, I won't say his name, his name is not a name I say, but we would meet back there sometimes, back in that old lot that's all weeds and scrub trees. Wild as kids and on the edge of being drunk. I was crazy for this guy, I mean crazy like I could hardly think of anybody but him or anything but the two of us making love the way we did, with him deep inside me I wanted it never to stop just fuck and fuck and fuck I'd whisper to him and this went on for a long time, two or three years then ended the way these things do and looking back on it I'm not able to recognize that woman as if she was someone not even not-me but a crazy woman I would despise, making so much of such a thing, risking her marriage and her kids finding out and her life being ruined for such a thing, my God. The things people do.

It's like living out a story that has to go its own way.

Behind the ice house in his car I'd think of Rhea and Rhoda and what happened that day upstairs in Roger Whipple's room. And the funeral parlor with the twins like dolls laid out and their eyes like dolls' eyes too that shut when you tilt them

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back. One night when I wasn't asleep but wasn't awake either I saw my parents standing in the doorway of my bedroom watching me and I knew their thoughts, how they were thinking of Rhea and Rhoda and of me their daughter wondering how they could keep me from harm and there was no clear answer.

In his car in his arms I'd feel my mind drift. After we'd made love or at least after the first time. And I saw Rhoda Kunkel hesitating on the stairs a few steps down from Roger Whipple. I saw her white-faced and scared but deciding to keep going anyway, pushing by Roger Whipple to get inside the room, to find Rhea, she had to brush against him where he was standing as if he meant to block her but not having the nerve exactly to block her and he was smelling of his body and breathing hard but not in imitation of any dog now, not with his tongue flopping and lolling to make them laugh. Rhoda was asking where was Rhea?—she couldn't see well at first in the dark little cubbyhole of a room because the sunshine had been so bright outside.

Roger Whipple said Rhea had gone home. His voice sounded scratchy as if it hadn't been used in some time. She'd gone home he said and Rhoda said right away that Rhea wouldn't go home without her and Roger Whipple came toward her saying yes she did, yes she *did* as if he was getting angry she wouldn't believe him. Rhoda was calling, Rhea? Where are you? Stumbling against something on the floor tangled with the bedclothes.

Behind her was this big boy saying again and again yes she did, yes she *did*, his voice rising but it would never get loud enough so that anyone would hear and come save her.

I wasn't there, but some things you know.

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Carl Little

Running Out of Ideas One Day

for dinner, vacation, carnality,
I took up an ancient text on military strategy
hoping to find the miracle subterfuge,
the perfect pineapple. Instead,

I read how Sammicheli united force
and elegance in his castles,
in the process inventing the "bastion triangular."
Force and elegance: the architecture

of my personal stronghold
has always called for a blank demeanor,
with steep walls and a moat
where crocs and anacondas cruise.

Let the drawbridge down for the shepherd,
for the raiser of geese.
Let the taxman wait in the rain,
his hands softening for want.

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Two Poems by Bin Ramke

An Old Philosopher

A man bigger than you and more intelligent
walks into his future as into a dining room
anticipating small surprises and large comforts.
He is the future.

A sleeve pinned to the uniform jacket
is said to flutter indicative of emptiness
not to mention the senselessness
of war, retribution, prosthetic tendencies
such as the poet's photographic blush
placed artistically thus—later they removed it
and restored the tintype to form, daguerreotype
to type, to be accurate, so to speak,
blushless and sepia. *The extreme*
of the known in the presence of the extreme
of the unknown. To any old philosopher
in cities such as Rome such ideas
as we amateurs derive are dreary:
empty sleeves fussily fluttering.

A man bigger than you and more intelligent
needed to see a hand-tinted world, a world
yellow and green. A man of passion,
as we say, as if there were another kind:
"How to convince you of the unknown
without resort to Art, Art
being what I least like in a timely world;
I want to say it directly, as in 'escaped
alone to tell thee.' I want to offer
delay, the extreme of the known blushing
on the sweet face of the Lady from Amherst."

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The poem sometimes cries for explanation,
and the poem becomes the explanation
of its occasion. Which is boring.
And is *a priori*. After the fact, i.e.,
the poem must be among other things
the *ding an sich*, false phrase he overuses
because A it is foreign and thus one
must jump hurdles to get it, get to it,
and because B the idea of The Thing Itself
is the skeleton of the poem, The Poem:
to him it is anyway, as to her in Amherst.

The Poem both is and comments on.
It takes the place of the mountain
in Amherst or Reading, but for the poet
and not for the mountaineer: The Climb
takes the place of the mountain,
her effort takes the place of dirty rock,
technical climbing when the beautiful
ropes web themselves across the sheer
cliff face, especially the face
which turns until she finds herself
climbing upside down into the future. . . .

Making one's way makes the poem.
The extreme of the known might, for instance,
be the body, the physical presence of the self
within the confines of arms and legs
and fingers and toes which find
their places in the fingerholds
and crevices of the rock face.

He had a brother who was a scientist.
As a boy the brother killed a cat and cleaned it
and presented the skeleton to his school.

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It was more beautiful than any poem,
more clean and white, gleaming in context
among the flasks and beakers and Bunsen
burners along long rows of sinks and sorrow
had no place there, only danger and delight,
discovery and the new made world making.

A man bigger than you and more intelligent
walks into his future as into a closet
full of the past, full of darkness
and simple desire, which is only to say
the wish for something, the sense
of something missed. Somewhere
in the undiscovered closet is a shade
of green more lovely than any tree,
more full of promise and of art
than any god imagines, those tiny creatures
too simple and too kind to understand us.
He knows it is the future because
it is too narrow to turn around in.

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After Hawthorne

Therefore, above all things, he loathed
his miserable self. Propped within that litter
of regret lay his jealous geometry's terms:
he'd leave a wan and wicked world behind, its glitter

and its long shadows like the tiny wish to be
a little happy. Regret, regret the exhaustion
of the day, the glitter and the gritty art
the day makes, the dawn. He knew he ought, on

such short notice as any life is, to get busy
with something like a life of art or honor.
So he painted bursting worlds, orange for sky
and you'd think, looking, that he was fonder

of the cleaning up after than of the party;
green trees spilled directly from the tube,
then with sudden silence the slight breeze
moves him, his world, his view infused

with the sort of insight you get from the x ray
of your own sprawling lungs, the dark spot
as likely a mistake in the developing as a sign
the dainty little organs have organized a plot

after all these years against you. The lie
is what you know has made you what you are,
you are the world the world believes, believes
itself to be with you. You go home, not far.

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Alan Williamson

Love and the Soul

Did you love her? I thought about her
continuously for a year. There were whole hours
there was nothing too thin about her look, her voice.

Did she love you? Utterly. But it never counted against
any doubt or impulse of renunciation.

*

Only in the dark
could we listen clearly
to the voice that can say nothing but *I am good. . .*
I remembered Psyche, and how

I never wished to question
the god's masterful refusal to be known.
I had seen
too well, in their exact

afternoon light, the bright porticoes
which are the beloved, immaterialized;
and knew that, at midnight,
in the central chamber

what lifts the lamp, what tells her
anything she loves must be a monster
is not just "the human compulsion
to see, to know, the rejection

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of whatever comfort derives from deception,"
but the soul's hatred and terror
of having all that depend
on the arbitrary contours of one flesh, one breath. . .

Another figure might be Stendhal's
of the branch
gathering crystals out of the cold water
at the bottom of a mine—

a girl drowned
in the shapeless, early depth within her man
the moment she takes on her specialness. . .
T. S. Eliot called requited love "the greater torment."

A man wanted to call the novel he never wrote that,
a man whose wife
kept dead mice and owls in the refrigerator,
to show just what they nourished each other by.

*

In what must be the misty, Northern
wandering of the story,
it is such small things—
a gold carding-comb, a gold thimble—

you are given with each failure,
each time you are told the place you want to go is
East of the Sun and West of the Moon. . .
But when the North Wind has spent itself and lies dying

having carried you to the castle
actually outside the universe,
it is these things that, given away,
let the soul enter; wake the beloved from false sleep. . .

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Reading it out loud,
this morning of rejection,
I do not understand the story further.
I want it to be true;

not to have to believe
that what lights up the world from within is always the
wrong thing;
that only struggle and limit
are the right.

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Two Poems by Lawrence Raab

Old Times

for my wife's mother

For a long time she pretended
she could remember. There were little tricks
involved, schemes and inventions, or so we thought
looking back. There were ways to speak
that gave away almost nothing. She'd sit in place
like a doll, you said, like a china doll,
the beautiful clear skin of her face
set in no particular expression, as if that, too,
was something she had practised,
stored up against the time she would have
only this part to play, and she wouldn't know it.
Other times, older times,
she could talk about. She could talk about you
as if you weren't beside her, but back
where there was still some shape to speak of.
When she wandered away, what was she looking for?
When she got out of bed at night, took the pictures
off the walls, and packed her things,
where was she going? Once she turned to you
while you were shopping, turned to you
as to any passerby on the street, and asked,
Would you mind very much if I came home with you?
Yes, mother, we'll go home now.
Then she knew who had taken her hand.
It must have felt like her wish had been granted.

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Since You Asked

for a friend who asked
to be in a poem

Since you asked, let's make it dinner
at your house—a celebration
for no reason, which is always
the best occasion. Are you worried
there won't be enough space, enough food?

But in a poem we can do anything we want.
Look how easy it is to add on rooms, to multiply
the wine and chickens. And while we're at it
let's take those trees that died last winter
and bring them back to life.

Things should look pulled together,
and we could use the shade—so even now
they shudder and unfold their bright new leaves.
And now the guests are arriving—everyone
you expected, then others as well:

friends who never became your friends,
the women you didn't marry, all their children.
And the dead—I didn't tell you
but they're always included in these gatherings—
hesitant and shy, they hang back at first

among the blossoming trees.
You have only to say their names,
ask them inside. Everyone will find a place
at your table. What more can I do?
The glasses are filled, the children are quiet.

My friend, it must be time for you to speak.

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The Ape Lady in Retirement

T. Coraghessan Boyle

Somehow, she found herself backed up against the artichoke display in the fruit and vegetable department at Waldbaum's, feeling as lost and hopeless as an orphan. She was wearing her dun safari shorts and matching workshirt; the rhino-hide sandals she'd worn at the Makoua Reserve clung to the soles of her pale, splayed, tired old feet. Outside the big plate glass windows, a sullen, grainy snow had begun to fall.

Maybe that was it, the snow. She was fretting over the vegetables, fumbling with her purse, the grocery list, the keys to the rheumatic old Lincoln her sister had left her, when she glanced up and saw it, this wonder, this phenomenon, this dishwater turned to stone, and for the life of her she didn't know what it was. And then it came to her, the word chipped from the recesses of her memory like an old bone dug from the sediment: *snow*. Snow. What had it been—forty years?

She gazed out past the racks of diet cola and facial cream, past the soap powder display and the thousand garish colors of the products she couldn't use and didn't want, and she was lost in a reminiscence so sharp and sudden it was like a blow. She saw her sister's eyes peering out from beneath the hood

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of her snowsuit, the drifts piled high over their heads, hot chocolate in a decorated mug, her father cursing as he bent to wrap the chains round the rear wheels of the car . . . and then the murmur of the market brought her back, the muted din concentrated now in a single voice, and she was aware that someone was addressing her. "Excuse me," the voice was saying, "excuse me."

She turned, and the voice took on form. A young man—a boy, really—short, massive across the shoulders, his dead-black hair cut close in a flattop, was standing before her. And what was that in his hand? A sausage of some sort, pepperoni, yes, and another word came back to her. "Excuse me," he repeated, "but aren't you Beatrice Umbo?"

She was. Oh, yes, she was—Beatrice Umbo, the celebrated ape lady, the world's foremost authority on the behavior of chimpanzees in the wild, Beatrice Umbo, come home to Connecticut to retire. She gave him a faint, distant smile of recognition. "Yes," she said softly, with a trace of the lisp that had clung to her since childhood, "and it's just terrible."

"Terrible?" he echoed, and she could see the hesitation in his eyes. "I'm sorry," he said, grinning unsteadily and thumping the pepperoni against his thigh, "but we read about you in school, in college, I mean. I even read your books, the first one, anyway—*Jungle Dawn*?"

She couldn't respond. It was his grin, the way his upper lip pulled back from his teeth and folded over his incisors. He was Agassiz, the very picture of Agassiz, and all of a sudden she was back in the world of leaves, back in the Makoua Reserve, crouched in a huddle of chimps. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"Of course I'm all right," she snapped, and at that moment she caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror behind the halved canteloupes. The whites of her eyes were stippled with yellow, her hair was like a fright wig, her face as rutted and seamed as an old saddlebag. Even worse, her skin had the oddest citrus cast to it, a color about midway between the hue of a grapefruit and an orange. She didn't look well, she knew it. But then what could they expect of a woman who'd devoted her life to science and survived dysentery, malaria, schisto-

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somiasis, hepatitis and sleeping sickness in the process, not to mention the little things like the chiggers that burrow beneath your toenails to lay their eggs. "I mean the fruit," she said, trying to bite back the lisp. "The fruit is terrible. No yim-yim," she sighed, gesturing toward the bins of tangerines, kumquats and pale seedless grapes. "No wild custard apple or tiger peach. They haven't even got passionfruit."

The boy glanced down at her cart. There were fifty yams—she'd counted them out herself—six gallons of full-fat milk and a five-pound block of cheese buried in its depths. All the bananas she could find, ranging in color from burnished green to putrescent black, were piled on top in a great towering pyramid that threatened to drop the bottom out of the thing. "They've got Italian chestnuts," he offered, looking up again and showing off his teeth in that big tentative grin. "And in a month or so they'll get those little torpedo-shaped things that come off the cactuses out west—prickly pear, that's what they call them."

She cocked her head to give him an appreciative look. "You're very sweet," she said, the lisp creeping back into her voice. "But you don't understand—I've got a visitor coming. A permanent visitor. And he's very particular about what he eats."

"I'm Howie Kantner," he said suddenly. "My father and me run Kantner Construction?"

She'd been in town less than a week, haunting the chilly cavernous house her mother had left her sister and her sister had left her. She'd never heard of Kantner Construction.

The boy ducked his head as if he were genuflecting, told her how thrilled he was to meet her and turned to go—but then he swung back round impulsively. "Couldn't you . . . I mean, do you think you'll need some help with all those bananas?"

She pursed her lips.

"I just thought . . . the boxboys are the pits here and you're so . . . casually dressed for the weather and all . . ."

"Yes," she said slowly, "yes, that would be very nice," and she smiled. She was pleased, terribly pleased. A moment earlier she'd felt depressed, out of place, an alien in her own home-

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town, and now she'd made a friend. He waited for her behind the checkout counter, this hulking, earnest college boy, this big post-adolescent male with the clipped brow and squared shoulders, and she beamed at him till her gums ached, wondering what he'd think if she told him he reminded her of a chimp.

Konrad was late. They'd told her three, but it was past five already and there was no sign of him. She huddled by the fire, draped in an afghan she'd found in a trunk in the basement, and listened to the clank and wheeze of the decrepit old oil burner as it switched itself fitfully on and off. It was still snowing, snowing like a curse, and she wished she were back in her hut at Makoua with the monsoon hammering at the roof. She looked out the window and thought she was on the moon.

It was close to seven when the knock at the door finally came. She'd been dozing, the notes for her lecture series scattered like refuse at her feet, the afghan drawn up tight round her throat. Clutching the title page as if it were a life jacket tossed to her on a stormy sea, she rose from the chair with a click of her arthritic knees and crossed the room to the door.

Though she'd swept the porch three times, the wind kept defeating her efforts, and when she pulled back the door she found Konrad standing in a drift up to his knees. He was huge—far bigger than she'd expected—and the heavy jacket, scarf and gloves exaggerated the effect. His trainer or keeper or whatever she was stood behind him, grinning weirdly, her arms laden with groceries. Konrad was grinning too, giving her the low closed grin she'd been the first to describe in the wild: it meant he was agitated but not yet stoked to the point of violence. His high-pitched squeals—*eeeee*! *eeeee*! *eeeee*!—filled the hallway.

"Miss Umbo?" the girl said, as Konrad, disdaining introductions, flung his knuckles down on the hardwood floor and scampered for the fire. "I'm Jill," the girl said, trying simultaneously to shake hands, pass through the doorframe and juggle the bags of groceries.

Beatrice was still trying to get over the shock of seeing a

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chimpanzee in human dress—and one so huge: he must have stood better than four and a half feet and weighed close to one-eighty—and it was a moment before she could murmur a greeting and offer to take one of the bags of groceries. The door slammed shut and the girl followed her into the kitchen while Konrad slapped his shoulders and stamped round the fireplace.

"He's so . . . so big," Beatrice said, depositing the bag on the oak table in the kitchen.

"I guess," the girl said, setting her bags down with a shrug.

"And what is all this?" Beatrice gestured at the groceries. She caught a glance of Konrad through the archway that led into the living room: he'd settled into her armchair and was studiously bent over her notes, tearing the pages into thin white strips with the delicate tips of his black leather fingers.

"Oh, this," the girl said, brightening. "This is the stuff he likes to eat," dipping into the near bag and extracting one box after another as if they were exhibits at a trial, "Carnation Instant Breakfast, cheese nachos, Fruit Roll-Ups, Sugar Daffies . . ."

"Are you—?" Beatrice hesitated, wondering how to phrase the question. "What I mean is, you're his trainer, I take it?"

The girl must have been in her mid-twenties, though she looked fourteen. Her hair was limp and blond, her eyes too big for her face. She was wearing faded jeans, a puffy down vest over a flannel shirt and a pair of two-hundred-dollar hiking boots. "Me?" she squealed, and then she blushed. Her voice dropped till it was nearly inaudible: "I'm just the person that cleans up his cage and all and I've always had this like way with animals . . ."

Beatrice was shocked. Shocked and disgusted. It was worse even than she'd suspected. When she agreed to take Konrad, she knew she'd be saving him from the sterility of a cage, from the anomie and humiliation of the zoo. And those were the very terms—anomie and humiliation—she'd used on the phone with his former trainer, with the zookeeper himself. For Konrad was no run-of-the-mill chimp snatched from the jungle and caged for the pleasure of the big bland white apes who

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lined up to gawk at him and make their little jokes at the expense of his dignity—though that would have been crime enough—no, he was special, extraordinary, a chimp made after the image of man.

Raïsed as a human, in one of those late-sixties experiments Beatrice deplored, he'd been bathed, dressed and pampered, taught to use cutlery and sit at a table, and he'd mastered 350 of the hand signals that comprised American Sign Language. (This last especially appalled her—at one time he could actually converse, or so they said.) But when he grew into puberty at the age of seven, when he developed the iron musculature and crackling sinews of the adolescent male who could reduce a room of furniture to detritus in minutes or snap the femur of a linebacker as if it were tinder, it was abruptly decided that he could be human no more. They took away his trousers and shoes, his stuffed toys and his color TV, and the overseers of the experiment made a quiet move to shift him to the medical laboratories for another, more sinister, sort of research. But he was famous by then and the public outcry landed him in the zoo instead, where they made a sort of clown of him, isolating him from the other chimps and dressing him up like something in a toy store window. There he'd languished for twenty-five years, neither chimp nor man.

Twenty-five years. And with people like this moon-eyed incompetent to look after him. It *was* a shock. "You mean to tell me you've had no training?" Beatrice demanded, the outrage constricting her throat till she could barely choke out the words. "None at all?"

The girl gave her a meek smile and a shrug of the shoulders.

"You've had nutritional training, certainly—you must have studied the dietary needs of the wild chimpanzee, at the very least . . ." and she gestured disdainfully at the bags of junk food, of salt and fat and empty calories.

The girl murmured something, some sort of excuse or melioration, but Beatrice never heard it. A sudden movement from the front room caught her eye, and all at once she remembered Konrad. She turned away from the girl as if she didn't exist and focused her bright narrow eyes on him, the

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eyes that had captured every last secret of his wild cousins, the rapt unblinking eyes of the professional voyeur.

The first thing she noticed was that he'd finished with her notes, the remnants of which lay strewn about the room like confetti. She saw too that he was calm now, at home already, sniffing at the afghan as if he'd known it all his life. Oblivious to her, he settled into the armchair, draped the afghan over his knees and began fumbling through the pockets of his overcoat like an absent-minded commuter. And then, while her mouth fell open and her eyes narrowed to pinpricks, he produced a cigar—a fine, green, tightly-rolled panatela—struck a match to light it and lounged back in an aureole of smoke, his feet, bereft now of the plastic galoshes, propped up luxuriously on the coffee table.

It was a night of stinging cold and sub-arctic wind, but though the panes rattled in their frames, the old house retained its heat. Beatrice had set the thermostat in the high eighties and she'd built the fire up beneath a cauldron of water that steamed the walls and windows till they dripped like the myriad leaves of the rain forest. Konrad was naked, as nature and evolution had meant him to be, and Beatrice was in the clean, starched khakis she'd worn in the bush for the past forty years. Potted plants—cane, ficus and Dieffenbachia—crowded the hallway, spilled from the windowsills and softened the corners of each of the downstairs rooms. In the living room, the TV roared at full volume, and Konrad stood before it, excited, signing at the screen and emitting a rising series of pant hoots: "*Hoo-hoo, hoo-ah-hoo-ah-hoo*!"

Watching from the kitchen, Beatrice felt her face pucker with disapproval. This TV business was no good, she thought, languidly stirring vegetables into a pot of chicken broth. Chimps had an innate dignity, an eloquence that had nothing to do with sign language, gabardine, color TV or nacho chips, and she was determined to restore it to him. The junk food was in the trash, where it belonged, along with the obscene little suits of clothes the girl had foisted on him, and she'd tried unplugging the TV set, but Konrad was too smart for her.

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Within thirty seconds he'd got it squawking again.

"*Eee-eee*!" he shouted now, slapping his palms rhythmically on the hardwood floor.

"Awright," the TV said in its stentorian voice, "take the dirty little stool pigeon out back and extoimenate him."

It was an unfortunate thing for the TV to say, because it provoked in Konrad a reaction that could only be described as a frenzy. Whereas before he'd been excited, now he was enraged. "*Wraaaaa*!" he screamed in a pitch no mere human could duplicate, and he charged the screen with a stick of firewood, every hair on his body sprung instantly erect. Good, she thought, stirring her soup as he flailed at the oak veneer cabinet and choked the voice out of it, good, good, good, as he backed away and bounced round the room like a huge india-rubber ball, the stick slapping behind him, his face contorted in a full open grin of incendiary excitement. Twice over the sofa, once up the bannister, and then he charged again, the stick beating jerkily at the floor. The crash of the screen came almost as a relief to her—at least there'd be no more of that. What puzzled her though, what arrested her hand in mid-stir, was Konrad's reaction. He stood stock-still a moment, then backed off, pouting and tugging at his lower lip, the screams tapering to a series of dolphin-like squeaks and whimpers of regret.

The moment the noise died, Beatrice became aware of another sound, low-pitched and regular, a signal it took her a moment to identify: someone was knocking at the door. Konrad must have heard it too. He looked up from the shattered cabinet and grunted softly. "*Urk*," he said, "*urk*, *urk*," and lifted his eyes to Beatrice's as she backed away from the stove and wiped her hands on her apron.

Who could it be, she wondered, and what must they have thought of all that racket? She hung the apron on a hook, smoothed back her hair and passed into the living room, neatly sidestepping the wreckage of the TV. Konrad's eyes followed her as she stepped into the foyer, flicked on the porch light and swung back the door.

"Hello? Miss Umbo?"

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Two figures stood bathed in yellow light before her, hominids certainly, and wrapped in barbaric bundles of down, fur and machine-stitched nylon.

"Yes?"

"I hope you don't . . . I mean, you probably don't remember me," said the squatter of the two figures, removing his knit cap to reveal the stiff black brush-cut beneath, "but we met a couple weeks ago at Waldbaum's? I'm Howie, Howie Kantner?"

Agassiz, she thought, and she saw his unsteady grin replicated on the face of the figure behind him.

"I hope it isn't an imposition, but this is my father, Howard," and the second figure, taller, less bulky in the shoulders, stepped forward with a slouch and an uneasy shift of his eyes that told her he was no longer the dominant male. "Pleased to meet you," he said in a voice ruined by tobacco.

She was aware of Konrad behind her—he'd pulled himself into the precarious nest he'd made in the coat tree of mattress stuffing and strips of carpeting from the downstairs hallway—and her social graces failed her. She didn't think to ask them in out of the cold till Howie spoke again. "I—I was wondering," he stammered, "my father's a big fan of yours, if you would sign a book for him?"

Smile, she told herself, and the command influenced her facial muscles. Ask them to come in. "Come in," she said, "please," and then she made a banal comment about the weather.

In they came, stamping and shaking and picking at their clothing, massive but obsequious, a barrage of apologies—"so late"; "we're not intruding?"; "do you mind?"—exploding around them. They exchanged a glance and wrinkled up their noses at the potent aroma and high visibility of Konrad. Howard Sr. clutched his book, a dog-eared paper edition of *The Wellsprings of Man*. From his coat tree, which Beatrice had secured to the high ceilings with a network of nylon tow rope, Konrad grunted softly. "No, not at all," she heard herself saying, and then she asked them if they'd like a cup of hot chocolate or tea.

Seated in the living room and divested of their impressive

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coats and ponderous boots, scarves, gloves and hats, father and son seemed subdued. They tried not to look at the ruined TV or at the coat tree or the ragged section of bare plaster where Konrad had stripped the flowered wallpaper to get at the stale but piquant paste beneath. Howie was having the hot chocolate; Howard Sr., the tea. "So how do you like our little town?" Howard Sr. asked as she settled into the armchair opposite him.

She hadn't uttered a word to a human being since Konrad's companion had left, and she was having difficulty with the amenities expected of her. Set her down amidst a convocation of chimps or even a troop of baboons and she'd never commit a faux pas or gaucherie, but here she felt herself on uncertain ground. *"Hate it," she said.*

Howard Sr. seemed to mull this over, while unbeknownst to him, Konrad was slipping down from the coat tree and creeping up at his back. "Is it that bad," he said finally, "or is it the difference between Connecticut and the, the—" He was interrupted by the imposition of a long, sinuous, fur-cloaked arm which snaked under his own to deftly snatch a pack of cigarettes from his shirt pocket. Before he could react, the arm was gone. *"Eeeee!"* screamed Konrad, *"eeee-eeee!"* and he retreated to the coat tree with his booty.

Beatrice rose immediately to her feet, ignoring the sharp pain that ground at her kneecaps, and marched across the room. She wouldn't have it, one of *her* chimps indulging a filthy human habit. Give it here, she wanted to say, but then she wouldn't have one of her chimps responding to human language either, as if he were some fawning lapdog or neutered cat. *"Woo-oo-oogh,"* she coughed at him.

"Wraaaaa!" he screamed back, bouncing down from his perch and careering round the room in a threat display, the cigarettes clutched tightly to his chest. She circled him warily, aware that Howie and his father loomed behind her now, their limbs loose, faces set hard. "Miss Umbo," Howie's voice spoke at her back, "do you need any help there?"

It was then that Konrad tore round the room again—up over the couch, the bannister, up the ropes and down—and

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Howard Sr. made a calculated grab for him. "No!" Beatrice cried, but the warning was superfluous: Konrad effortlessly eluded the old man's clumsy swipe, bounced twice and was back up in the coat tree before he could blink his eyes.

"Heh, heh," Howard Sr. laughed from the top of his throat, "frisky little fella, isn't he?"

Beatrice stood before him, trying to catch her breath. "You don't," she began, wondering how to put it, "you don't want to, uh, obstruct him when he displays."

Howie, the son, looked bemused.

"You don't, I think, appreciate the strength of this creature. A chimpanzee—a full-grown male, as Konrad is—is at least three times as strong as his human counterpart. Now certainly, I'm sure he wouldn't deliberately hurt anyone—"

"Hurt us?" Howie exclaimed, involuntarily flexing his shoulders, "I mean, he barely comes up to my chest."

A contented grunt escaped Konrad at that moment. He lay sprawled in his nest, the rubbery soles of his prehensile feet blackly dangling. He'd wadded up the entire pack of cigarettes and tucked it beneath his lower lip. Now he extracted the wad of tobacco and paper, sniffed it with an appreciative roll of his eyes and replaced it between cheek and gum. Beatrice sighed. She looked at Howie, but didn't have the strength to respond.

Later, while Konrad snored blissfully from his perch and the boy and his father had accepted first one bowl of chicken soup and then another, and the conversation drew away from the prosaic details of Beatrice's life in Connecticut—and did she know Tiddy Brohmer and Harriet Dillers?—and veered instead toward Makoua and the Umbo Primate Center, Howard Sr. brought up the subject of airplanes. He flew, and so did his son. He'd heard about the bush pilots in Africa and wondered about her experience of them.

Beatrice was so surprised she had to set down her tea for fear of spilling it. "You fly?" she repeated.

Howard Sr. nodded and levelled his keen glistening gaze on her. "Twenty-two hundred and some odd hours' worth, he said. "And Howie. He's a regular fanatic. Got his license when

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he was sixteen, and since we bought the Cessna there's hardly a minute when he's on the ground."

"I love it," Howie asserted, crouched over his massive thighs on the very edge of the chair. "I mean, it's my whole life. When I get out of school I want to restore classic aircraft. I know a guy who's got a Stearman."

Beatrice warmed up her smile. All at once she was back in Africa, 2500 feet up, the land spread out like a mosaic at her feet. Champ, her late husband, had taken to planes like a chimp to trees, and though she'd never learned to fly herself, she'd spent whole days at a time in the air with him, spying out chimp habitat in the rich green forests of Cameroon, the Congo and Zaire, or coasting above the golden veldt to some distant, magical village in the hills. She closed her eyes a moment, overcome with the intensity of the recollection. Champ, Makoua, the storms and sunsets and the close, savage, unimpeachable society of the apes—it was all lost to her, lost forever.

"Miss Umbo?" Howie was peering into her eyes with an expression of concern, the same expression he'd worn that afternoon in Waldbaum's when he'd asked if she needed help with the bananas. "Miss Umbo," he repeated, "anytime you want to see Connecticut from the air, just you let me know."

"That's very kind of you," she said.

"Really," and he grinned Agassiz's grin, "it'd be a pleasure."

Things were sprouting from the dead dun earth—crocuses, daffodils, nameless buds and strange pale fingertips of vegetation—by the time the first of her scheduled lectures came round. It was an evening lecture, open to the public, and held in the Buffon Memorial Auditorium of the State University. Her topic was "Tool Modification in the Chimps of the Makoua Reserve," and she'd chosen fifty color slides for illustration. For a while she'd debated wearing one of the crepe de chine dresses her sister had left hanging forlornly in the closet, but in the end she decided to stick with the safari shorts.

As the auditorium began to fill, she stood rigid behind the

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curtain, deaf to the chatter of the young professor who was to introduce her. She watched the crowd gather—blank-faced housewives and their paunchy husbands, bearded professors, breast-thumping students, the stringy, fur-swathed women of the Anthropology Club—watched them command their space, choose their seats, pick at themselves and wriggle in their clothing. "I'll keep it short," the young professor was saying, "some remarks about your career in general and the impact of your first two books, then maybe two minutes on Makoua and the Umbo Primate Center, is that all right?" Beatrice didn't respond. She was absorbed in the dynamics of the crowd, listening to their chatter, observing their neck craning and leg crossing, watching the furtive plumbing of nostrils and sniffing of armpits, the obsessive fussing with hair and jewelry. Howie and his father were in the second row. By the time she began, it was standing room only.

It went quite well at first—she had that impression, anyway. She was talking of what she knew better than anyone else alive, and she spoke with a fluency and grace she couldn't seem to summon at Waldbaum's or the local Exxon station. She watched them—fidgeting, certainly, but patient and intelligent, all their primal needs— their sexual urges, the necessity of relieving themselves and eating to exhaustion—sublimated beneath the spell of her words. Agassiz, she told them about Agassiz, the first of the wild apes to let her groom him, dead twenty years now. She told them of Spenser and Leakey and Darwin, of Lula, Pout and Chrysalis. She described how Agassiz had fished for termites with the stem of a plant he'd stripped of leaves, how Lula had used a stick to force open the concrete bunkers in which the bananas were stored, and how Clint, the dominant male, had used a wad of leaves as a sponge to dip the brains from the shattered skull of a baby baboon.

The problem arose when she began the slide show. For some reason, perhaps because the medium so magnified the size of the chimps and he felt himself wanting in comparison, Konrad threw a fit. (She hadn't wanted to bring him, but the last

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time she'd left him home alone he'd switched on all the burners of the stove, overturned and gutted the refrigerator and torn the back door from its hinges—all this prior to committing a rash of crimes, ranging from terrorizing Mrs. Binchy's doberman to crushing and partially eating a still unidentified white angora kitten.) He'd been sitting just behind the podium, slouched in a folding chair around which Doris Beatts, the young professor, had arranged an array of fruit, including yim-yim flown in for the occasion. "Having him onstage is a terrific idea," she'd gushed, pumping Beatrice's hand and flashing a zealot's smile that showed off her pink and exuberant gums, "what could be better? It'll give the audience a real frisson, having a live chimp sitting there."

Yes, it gave them a frisson, all right.

Konrad had been grunting softly to himself and working his way happily through the yim-yim, but no sooner had the lights been dimmed and the first slide projected, than he was up off the chair with a shriek of outrage. Puffed to twice his size, he swayed toward the screen on his hind legs, displaying at the gigantic chimp that had suddenly materialized out of the darkness. "*Wraaaaa*!" he screamed, dashing the chair to pieces and snatching up one of its jagged legs to whirl over his head like a club. There was movement in the front row. A murmur of concern—concern, not yet fear— washed through the crowd. "*Woo-oo-oogh*," Beatrice crooned, trying to calm him. "It's all right," she heard herself saying through the speakers that boomed her voice out over the auditorium. But it wasn't all right. She snapped to the next slide, a close-up of Clint sucking termites from a bit of straw, and Konrad lost control, throwing himself at the screen with a screech that brought the audience to its feet.

Up went the lights. To an individual, the audience was standing. Beatrice didn't have time to catalogue their facial expressions, but they ran the gamut from amusement to shock, terror and beyond. One woman—heavyset, with arms like Christmas turkeys and black little deep-set eyes—actually cried out as if King Kong himself had broken loose. And Kon-

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rad? He stood bewildered amidst the white tatters of the screen, his fur gone limp again, his knuckles on the floor. For a moment, Beatrice actually thought he looked embarrassed.

Later, at the reception, people crowded round him and he took advantage of the attention to shamelessly cadge cigarettes, plunder the canape trays and guzzle Coca-Cola as if it were spring water. Beatrice wanted to put a stop to it—he was demeaning himself, the clown in the funny suit with his upturned palm thrust through the bars of his cage—but the press around her was terrific. Students and scholars, a man from the local paper, Doris Beatts and her neurasthenic husband, the Kantners, father and son, all bombarding her with questions: Would she go back? Was it for health reasons she'd retired? Did she believe in UFOs? Reincarnation? The New York Yankees? How did it feel having a full-grown chimp in the house? Did she know Vlastos Reizek's monograph on the seed content of baboon feces in the Kalahari? It was almost ten o'clock before Konrad turned away to vomit noisily in the corner and Howie Kantner, beaming sunnily and balancing half a plastic cup of warm white wine on the palm of one hand, asked her when they were going to go flying.

"Soon," she said, watching the crowd part as Konrad, a perplexed look on his face, bent to lap up the sour overflow of his digestive tract.

"How about tomorrow?" Howie said.

"Tomorrow," Beatrice repeated, struck suddenly with the scent of the rain forest, her ears ringing with the call of shrike and locust and tree toad. "Yes," she lisped, "that would be nice."

Konrad was subdued the next day. He spent the early morning half-heartedly tearing up the carpet in the guest room, then brooded over his nuts and bananas, all the while pinning Beatrice with an accusatory look, a look that had nacho chips and Fruit Roll-Ups written all over it. Around noon, he dragged himself across the floor like a hundred-year-old man and climbed wearily into his nest. Beatrice felt bad, but she wasn't about to give in. They'd made him schizophrenic—

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neither chimp nor man—and if there was pain involved in reacquainting him with his roots, with his true identity, there was nothing else she could do about it. Besides, she was feeling schizophrenic herself. Konrad was a big help—the smell of him, the silken texture of his fur as she groomed him, the way he scratched around in the basement when he did his business—but still she felt out of place, still she missed Makoua with an ache that wouldn't go away, and as the days accumulated like withered leaves at her feet, she found herself wishing she'd stayed on there to die.

Howie appeared at ten of three, his rust-eaten Datsun rumbling at the curb, the omnipresent grin on his lips. It was unseasonably warm for mid-April and he wore a red T-shirt that showed off the extraordinary development of his pectorals, deltoids and biceps; a blue windbreaker was flung casually over one shoulder. "Miss Umbo," he boomed as she answered the door, "it's one perfect day for flying. Visibility's got to be twenty-five miles or more. You ready?"

She was. She'd been looking forward to it, in fact. "I hope you don't mind if I bring Konrad along," she said.

Howie's smile faded for just an instant. Konrad stood at her side, his lower lip unfurled in a pout. "*Hoo-hoo*," he murmured, eyes meek and round. Howie regarded him dubiously a moment, and then the grin came back. "Sure," he said, shrugging, "I don't see why not."

It was a twenty-minute ride to the airport. Beatrice stared out the window at shopping centers, car lots, Burger King and Stereo City, at cemeteries that stretched as far as she could see. Konrad sat in back, absorbed in plucking cigarette butts from the rear ashtray and making a neat little pile of them on the seat beside him. Howie was oblivious. He kept up a steady stream of chatter the whole way, talking about airplanes mostly, but shading into his coursework at school and how flipped out his Anthro prof would be when she heard he was taking Beatrice flying. For her part, Beatrice was content to let the countryside flash by, murmuring an occasional "yes" or "uh huh" when Howie paused for breath.

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The airport was tiny, two macadam strips in a grassy field, thirty or forty airplanes lined up in ragged rows, a cement block building the size of her basement. A sign over the door welcomed them to Arkbelt Airport. Howie pushed the plane out onto the runway himself and helped Beatrice negotiate the high step up into the cockpit. Konrad clambered into the back and allowed Beatrice to fasten his seatbelt. For a long while they sat on the ground while Howie, grinning mechanically, revved the engine and checked this gauge or that.

The plane was a Cessna 182, painted a generic orange and white and equipped with dual controls, autopilot, a storm scope and four cramped vinyl seats. It was about what she'd expected—a little shinier and less battered than Champ's Piper, but no less noisy or bone-rattling. Howie gunned the engine and the plane jolted down the runway with an apocalyptic roar, Beatrice clinging to the plastic handgrip till she could taste her breakfast in the back of her throat. But then they lifted off like gods, liberated from the grip of the earth, and Connecticut swelled beneath them, revealing the drift and flow of its topology and the hidden patterns of its dismemberment.

"Beautiful," she screamed over the whine of the engine.

Howie worked the flaps and drew the yoke toward him. They banked right and rose steadily. "See that out there?" he shouted, pointing out her window to where the ocean threw the sky back at them. "Long Island Sound."

From just behind her, Konrad said: "*Wow-wow, er-er-er-er*!" The smell of him, in so small a confine, was staggering.

"You want to sightsee here," Howie shouted, "maybe go over town and look for your house and the university and all, or do you want to go out over the Island a ways and then circle back?"

She was dazzled, high in the empyrean, blue above, blue below. "The Island," she shouted, exhilarated, really exhilarated, for the first time since she'd left Africa.

Howie levelled off the plane and the tan lump of Long Island loomed ahead of them. "Great, huh?" he shouted, gesturing toward the day like an impresario, like the man

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who'd made it. Beatrice beamed at him. "Woooo!" Howie said, pinching his nostrils and making an antic face, "he's ripe today, Konrad, isn't he?"

"Forty years," Beatrice laughed, proud of Konrad, proud of the stink, proud of every chimp she'd ever known and proud of this boy Howie too—why, he was nothing but a big chimp himself. It was then—while she was laughing, while Howie mugged for her and she began to feel almost whole for the first time since she'd left Makoua—that the trouble began. Like most trouble, it arose out of a misunderstanding. Apparently, Konrad had saved one of the butts from Howie's car, and when he reached out nimbly to depress the cigarette lighter, Howie, poor Howie, thought he was going for the controls and grabbed his wrist.

A mistake.

"No!" Beatrice cried, and immediately the tug of war spilled over into her lap. "Let go of him!"

"*Eeeee*! *Eeeee*!" Konrad shrieked, his face distended in the full open grin of high excitement, already stoked to violence. She felt the plane dip out of from under her as Howie, his own face gone red with the rush of blood, struggled to keep it on course with one hand while fighting back Konrad with the other. It was no contest. Konrad slipped Howie's grasp and then grabbed *his* wrist, as if to say, "How do you like it?"

"Get off me, goddamnit!" Howie bellowed, but Konrad didn't respond. Instead, he jerked Howie's arm back so swiftly and suddenly it might have been the lever of a slot machine; even above the noise of the engine, Beatrice could hear the shoulder give, and then Howie's bright high yelp of pain filled the compartment. In the next instant Konrad was in front, in the cockpit, dancing from Beatrice's lap to Howie's and back again, jerking at the controls, gibbering and hooting and loosing his bowels in a frenzy like nothing she'd ever seen.

"Son of a bitch!" Howie was working up a frenzy of his own, the plane leaping and bucking as he punched in the autopilot and hammered at the chimp with his left hand, the right dangling uselessly, his eyes peeled back in terror. "*Hoo-ah-hoo-ah-hoo*!" Konrad hooted, spewing excrement and springing

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into Beatrice's lap. For an instant he paused to shoot Howie a mocking glance and then he snatched the yoke to his chest and the plane shot up with a clattering howl while Howie flailed at him with the heavy meat of his fist.

Konrad took the first two blows as if he didn't notice them, then abruptly dropped the yoke, the autopilot kicking in to level them off. Howie hit him again and Beatrice knew she was going to die. "*Er-er*," Konrad croaked experimentally, and Howie, panic in his face, hit him again. And then, as casually as he might have reached out for a yam or banana, Konrad returned the blow and the plane jerked with the force of it. "*Wraaaaa*!" Konrad screamed, but Howie didn't hear him. Howie was unconscious. Unconscious, and smeared with shit. And now, delivering the coup de grace, Konrad sprang to his chest, snatched up Howie's left hand—the hand that had pummeled him—and bit off the thumb. A snap of the jaws and it was gone. Howie's heart pumped blood to the wound.

In that moment—the moment of Howie's disfigurement—Beatrice's own heart turned over in her chest. She looked at Konrad, perched atop poor Howie, and at Howie, who even in repose managed to favor Agassiz. They were beyond Long Island now, headed out to sea, high over the Atlantic. Champ had tried to teach her to fly, but she'd had no interest in it. She looked at the instrument panel and saw nothing. For a moment the idea of switching on the radio came into her head, but then she glanced at Konrad and thought better of it.

Konrad was looking into her eyes. The engine hummed, Howie's head fell against the door, the smell of Konrad—his body, his shit—filled her nostrils. They had five hours' flying time, give or take a few minutes, that much she knew. She looked out over the nose of the plane to where the sea swallowed up the rim of the world. Africa was out there, distant and serene, somewhere beyond the night that fell like an axe across the horizon. She could almost taste it.

"*Urk*," Konrad said, and he was still looking at her. His eyes were soft now, his breathing regular. He sat atop Howie in a forlorn slouch, the cigarette forgotten, the controls irrelevant,

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nothing at all. "*Urk*," he repeated, and she knew what he wanted, knew in a rush of comprehension that took her all the way back to Makoua and that first, long-ago touch of Agassiz's strange spidery fingers.

She held his eyes. The engine droned. The sea beneath them seemed so still you could walk on it, so soft you could wrap yourself up in it. She reached out and touched his hand. "*Urk*," she said.

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Movement could be observed through the back window of the Ford. I caught a glimspe of Eileen's hair, then of a hand, Eileen's also. "He sits up in the kitchen, drinking cocoa," Mavis. "He won't go up to bed until all of us are in."

"Are there many in the family, Mavis?"

"Six of us."

Mavis told me about her brothers and sisters, what their names were and where each of them worked. She related various family incidents there had been, all of them to do with returning to the house late, One of her sisters had been going out with a man called Corrigan whom her father had taken against because he kept her out beyond an agreed hour. Her father had forbidden the relationship in the end.

Voices approached the alleyway. Three men turned into it. They were discussing an argument one of them was conducting with an insurance company about the cover offered on a house while there was scaffolding on it. " The minute it goes up the whole caboodle is void. " Did you ever hear the beat of that?"

"They'll try anything on."

"Isn't a question for the courts, Ger?"

"I'll see you in court', I said. The very words."

That was a rattle of keys. "I'll drop you off in Cabra, Ger" one of the men said. "How you're doing?" he greeted Mavis and myself as he passed us.

"I'm afraid there's a couple making use of your car," I said.

A William Trevor manuscript page from the original draft of the story "In Love with Ariadne."

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The Art of Fiction CVIII
William Trevor

William Trevor first achieved prominence with the publication of his second novel, The Old Boys *(1964); but perhaps he is best known for his volumes of short stories, including* The Day We Got Drunk on Cake *(1968),* Angel at the Ritz and Other Stories *(1976), winner of the Royal Society of Literature Award, and* The News from Ireland *(1986). His other novels include* The Children of Dynmouth *(1977), winner of the Whitbread Prize for Fiction,* Fools of Fortune *(1983), and most recently* Silence in the Garden *(1988).*

Trevor met me at the Exeter railway station on a chilly, driz-

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zly February morning, cutting a rather startling figure on the platform in his matching tweed greatcoat and deerstalker hat. Although my train had kept him waiting for nearly an hour, he was smiling when I arrived, and even apologized ambassadorially for British Rail's inefficiency.

Trevor lives in a ruined mill in the green countryside of Devon, with his wife, Jane. They also spend a few months of the year in Tuscany and go back regularly to Ireland, where he was born. The interview took place in the sitting room of their Victorian farmhouse, where a small fire burned in the hearth. Books lay neatly stacked on a side table amidst fringed lampshades, and the walls were bare with the exception of a few Redouté prints. Windows curtained in Wedgewood-blue velvet opened out over rolling downs. Trevor settled languidly into an armchair, crossed his long legs, and bore the expression of a man who had just fastened his seat belt for a long and possibly perilous airplane ride.

Nearly sixty, William Trevor is youthfully slender. In his brown cardigan, tweed tie, and corduroy trousers he resembled a kindly country schoolmaster. Sunk deep into the velvet cushions, Mr. Trevor spoke for nearly four hours—sometimes rambling generously, and at other times shutting down completely if the question was too personal. He was so detached in speaking about himself one might have thought he were discussing someone he vaguely remembered meeting at a party. After several hours we broke for a hearty luncheon of turkey pie, homemade vegetable soup, cheese and fruit, and a delicious bottle of Montepulciano chianti.

By the end of the interview it was dark, and we had a celebratory drink. It was only after the tape recorder had been put away that Mr. Trevor, clutching a brimming glassful of sherry, laughingly admitted that twenty years previously he himself had been dispatched to conduct a Paris Review *interview. He had failed, in fact, to get the formidably taciturn Anthony Powell to do any talking whatsoever. They admitted defeat almost immediately, he recalled, and spent most of the afternoon stalking the estate grounds in an uncomfortable si-*

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lence. Although I sympathized with his predicament, I was nonetheless grateful that the memory prompted him to be so dutiful a subject.

INTERVIEWER

What did you do after leaving university?

WILLIAM TREVOR

When I left Trinity Dublin, I tried to get a job, and it was very difficult in those days—in the 1950s in Ireland. Eventually I found an advertisement in a newspaper that said someone's child needed to be taught. "Would suit a nun" it suggested at the end of it, which was interesting, and I actually got that job. So I used to leave Dublin every day on the bus, go about twenty-five miles into the country, and teach this rather backward child. Her mother brought in the neighbor's children, and a little academy was formed.

INTERVIEWER

Why had they asked for a nun?

TREVOR

Because nuns sometimes have time on their hands. It was half a day's work, which was enough to live on, and this went on for about a year. I wasn't interested in writing in those days. I left that job when I got married, and then worked in a school in Northern Ireland for about eighteen months, before the school went bankrupt. We had to leave Ireland after that because I couldn't get another job. I taught in a school in England for two years or so—in the Midlands near Rugby—before deciding to try and make a living as a sculptor. I came down to the west country and set myself up, rather like Jude the Obscure, as a church sculptor, and existed like that for seven years. Then, when our first child was about to be born, it was clear that the money couldn't be spread between three people, so I gave that up, and got a job writing advertisements—which I was very lucky to get because I knew noth-

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ing about it. I was thirty. We moved to London, and I wrote advertisements for some years, always on the point of being sacked.

INTERVIEWER

Why?

TREVOR

Because I was extremely bad at it. It was then that I began to write short stories. I was given a typewriter and endless cups of tea. I was always allowed to spend days and days over an advertisement, because they were regarded as so very important. If I was writing, for instance, four lines about paint, they wouldn't expect to see any copy for two days. I couldn't take that seriously so I began to write stories. I wrote *The Old Boys* while I was there, and two other novels I think.

INTERVIEWER

On company time?

TREVOR

Not entirely. But I did photocopy one of my novels on the company machine. The poet Gavin Ewart, who also was at the agency, refers to that in one of his poems: "Later we both worked at Notley's—where no highbrow had to grovel / and I remember Trevor (with feminine help) xeroxing a whole novel. / 'I see you're both working late,' the Managing Director said / as he went off to his routine gin and tonics and dinner and bed." In the end I persuaded them to allow me to work two days a week, but I abused that privilege. Jane and I went to Bruges one weekend and didn't come back. I'd left some firm in the Midlands in the lurch. I resigned just as I was on the point of being sacked. I've always had an uneasy relationship with employers.

INTERVIEWER

Did you enjoy any aspect of working in an ad agency?

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TREVOR

Only in retrospect. But all experience is good for writers—except physical pain. Office life is interesting. People behave quite differently from the way they behave at home with their families. I had to visit a factory near Birmingham, I remember, that manufactured screws. I'd never have met people who made screws otherwise, and I happen to be particularly interested in the work people do. And I was always seriously frightened that I was going to be sacked, and that, too, is a useful feeling to remember.

INTERVIEWER

Did you produce good copy?

TREVOR

Oh, no. I produced very bad copy. I found it difficult to write convincingly about boat propellers or beer or airlines. I could never think of slogans. But advertising wasn't a very big part of my life—I was a teacher for just as long, and if ever I had to earn a salary again I'd prefer to teach, I think.

INTERVIEWER

What did you teach?

TREVOR

More or less everything really. I liked teaching math best because I don't have a natural way with figures and therefore had sympathy with the children who didn't either. And I greatly respected the ones who did possess that aptitude. My skill in art and English made me impatient, and I found those subjects rather dreary to teach as a result. "Why are the art room walls covered with pictures of such ugly women?" a headmaster asked me once. "And why have some of them got those horrible cigarette butts hanging out of their nostrils?" I explained that I had asked the children to paint the ugliest woman they could think of. Unfortunately, almost all of them had looked no further than the headmaster's wife. I like that devilish thing in children.

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INTERVIEWER

Were you really a chicken farmer too?

TREVOR

No, I was never a chicken farmer; I'm sorry to have to say I wasn't. I read in an American newspaper once that I was a very good polo player which pleased me enormously. I've never played polo in my life.

INTERVIEWER

When did you first want to be a writer?

TREVOR

I wanted to be a writer when I was very young. I was a great reader of thrillers. When I was ten I wanted to write thrillers. And I went on wanting to be a writer for a long time, and then, under the influence of an art master, I discovered sculpture. So I stopped wanting to write, and in fact didn't take up writing seriously until quite late in life. I didn't write at all during the time I was a student.

INTERVIEWER

What were you reading around the time that you began to get serious about writing?

TREVOR

I had graduated from thrillers and detective stories, and begun to read A. J. Cronin and Francis Brett Young, Cecil Roberts—middlebrow authors like that. I thought them marvelous, but later I moved on from them to Somerset Maugham, whom I've always admired—in particular his short stories—and then I began to read the Irish writers whom I'd never read, because we didn't in Ireland for some reason. We ignored them, perhaps because they were homegrown produce. I probably began with Joyce; and at some point I read Dickens and the Victorians. I read hungrily and delightedly, and have realized since that you can't write unless you read.

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INTERVIEWER

Your own style of writing is very steady—were you experimenting at all with form at that time? Do you think your writing has changed much?

TREVOR

No, I think all writing is experimental. The very obvious sort of experimental writing is not really more experimental than that of a conventional writer like myself. I experiment all the time but the experiments are hidden. Rather like abstract art: you look at an abstract picture, and then you look at a close-up of a Renaissance painting and find the same abstractions.

INTERVIEWER

When you wrote *The Old Boys*, were you friends with other writers and artists?

TREVOR

Up to that time my friends were mostly from the art world rather than from the world of literature; I didn't really know any other writers. But I've never gone in for the business of belonging to sets of people. For some reason I'm not drawn by that. I have friends because I like them. I hate the idea of groups.

INTERVIEWER

Was *A Standard of Behavior* your first novel?

TREVOR

That's really a fragment which was written for profit when I was very poor. Strictly speaking it is my first novel, written some time before *The Old Boys*, but *The Old Boys* was the first serious thing I ever wrote.

INTERVIEWER

Did you have any difficulty getting published?

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TREVOR

Oddly enough, no. Everything else had been difficult—trying to get space in galleries, for instance. A couple of my short stories were published in magazines—*The London Magazine* and the *Transatlantic Review*, and one or two glossy magazines—and then an editor was shown them, or read them, and he suggested the writing of a novel. He actually gave me £50 to start writing *The Old Boys*. I was very lucky with that novel because it was turned into a television play and a radio play, and somehow or other people found it funny, and I began to do a bit of reviewing, and wrote a stage play. It was just chance or good fortune, and at least it made up for the fact that it had been so very difficult to make a living of any kind for the ten or fifteen years before then.

INTERVIEWER

How old were you when *The Old Boys* came out?

TREVOR

I think it came out in 1964, so I must have been thirty-six.

INTERVIEWER

I read that Evelyn Waugh gave *The Old Boys* his imprimatur . . . how did that come about?

TREVOR

He read it, said that he liked it, and because of that he was quoted on the jacket.

INTERVIEWER

Did you have much self-confidence starting out?

TREVOR

I don't think so. I think self-confidence is a very dangerous thing for writers. I tend to write in a fragile, edgy, doubtful sort of way, trying things out all the time, never confident that I've got something right.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you think of yourself as being part of an Irish literary tradition?

TREVOR

That's a question that usually irritates Irish writers very much because they feel it implies an Irish writer is rather like a writer from, say, Liverpool or Yorkshire, suggesting a local and regional authority.

INTERVIEWER

Isn't it the contrary?

TREVOR

It is, in fact, the contrary. I always call myself an Irish writer. I'm one of the few Irish writers who actually likes the phrase. Since I am an Irishman, I feel I belong to the Irish tradition. I don't really feel that being Irish is the important thing. What is important is to take Irish provincialism—which is what I happen to know about because it's what I come from—and to make it universal.

INTERVIEWER

When you were growing up did you have heroes who were Irish writers? Have you ever been aware of trying to emulate anyone in particular?

TREVOR

If I thought of Irish heroes at all I thought of Irish political leaders. In those days Irish writers weren't as established as they are now. Yeats and Bernard Shaw were very much alive when I was a child, and they hadn't the stature that they have since acquired. All the poetry I remember learning, apart from "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," was English or Scottish poetry. I'm very fond of Joyce, especially *Dubliners*. But I have never thought in terms of literary heroes.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you feel a sense of duty or obligation to address the political situation in Ireland in your work? Sometimes you do address it—as in *Fools of Fortune* and in *The News from Ireland*, where political tyranny is the underpinning of the narrative—but you also write with equal intensity about the strife of a suburban housewife and her carefully-applied lipstick.

TREVOR

I don't feel it as a duty. If you are an Irishman, and if you have lived through this particular period in Irish history—the very recent period of Irish history—it's bound to involve you. You reflect and dwell upon it a great deal. It will therefore creep into what you write whether you like it or not; and you just let it creep in where it seems to be right. It's exactly as you said, you've really answered the question: sometimes it's there and it suggests something to you, and sometimes something else suggests itself. I feel exactly the same intensity about the housewife with the lipstick as I do about some family that has suffered in the Ulster crisis. The only reason Ireland comes into it is because Ireland is my country and I'm familiar with it. I mean, I'm as horrified about a bomb in Bologna as I am about a bomb in Derry. And I am as heartbroken by the death of innocent Italians or Americans as by anything that happens in Ireland.

INTERVIEWER

It's difficult to know to what extent one is engaged or involved, especially indirectly, in the troubles of one's country—what you say about responsibility "creeping in" seems quite right.

TREVOR

You are involved as a person. But quite often the way you are involved as a person doesn't make for good writing. The writer and the person are two very separate entities. You think as a person in a way that is not the same as the way you think as a writer. It is only when you actually feel, as a writer, "*this*

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has got the makings of a story in it," that you will use it. Otherwise it really has no interest to you as a writer. You may feel strongly about something, but there may be nothing you can do with that intensity of feeling, no story to tell. Whereas you can tell a story just because it makes a good story. And you tell it, because that's how you communicate. It's better to tell a good story than to feel more strongly as a person while you tell a bad one. It's a foggy area, this—it's almost impossible to talk about it. People like me write because otherwise we are pretty inarticulate. Our articulation is our writing. All of this—for me at least—is particularly difficult to analyze. As soon as I begin to analyze I feel myself becoming some kind of academic who's examining what I'm doing, and that's most uncomfortable. It's a strange trinity—the person, the writer, the analyst. I try to keep the first and the last out of what I do.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the well-developed sense of tragedy in your work is informed by the crisis-bound state of Ireland, on any level, or by your exposure to the suffering of the Irish?

TREVOR

It's hard to winkle out an answer to that. I've got a feeling that I'm not affected in that particular way. I don't know that I soak up something that then goes through an artistic net and comes out the other end. I think it's more likely that my sense of tragedy probably comes from childhood. And I say that because countries—one's own country—haven't anything to do with human relationships, whereas something you observed in childhood so often has. That is where I think both tragedy and comedy come from. The struggle in Ireland, and the sorrow, is a very good backdrop for a fiction writer, but I don't think, certainly not for me, that it is any sort of inspiration. Possibly another writer would react differently.

INTERVIEWER

Why do you think that?

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TREVOR

Well, what seems to nudge me is something that exists between two people, or three, and if their particular happiness or distress exists for some political reason, then the political reason comes into it—but the relationship between the people comes first. I'm always trying to get rid of a big reason—a political one, for instance—but sometimes it's difficult. Human reasons, for me, are more interesting than political ones.

INTERVIEWER

You once said, "You have to get out of Ireland before you can really know it." What did you mean by that?

TREVOR

It's really a question of being too close to something. I'd never been outside the country until my early twenties, and I think if I'd remained there in a town like Skibbereen, in County Cork, I wouldn't have seen it the way you should see it—like looking down the wrong end of a telescope. I'd not be able to see Ireland in terms of other countries. I think that applies to any country, not just to Ireland. Most writers benefit from exile.

INTERVIEWER

Then there isn't something special about Ireland, some peculiar quality about it that drove you away with all the other famous exiles?

TREVOR

No; the only thing that drove me away from Ireland was the fact that I couldn't get work there. I didn't want to leave Ireland. I would have stayed there. I wasn't ambitious to go away in order to "see Ireland correctly from a distance"; it's just that the accident of going away has caused me to see it. Had I remained there, and had I begun to write there, I then might have shovelled myself out. I might have said, "You've got to get out because you can't see the place properly," or perhaps I wouldn't have been able to write about it at all. I don't know

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what would have happened. I didn't write about Ireland for a very long time. I wrote books which were thought to be very English, especially in America, and that, of course, was because I was writing about a country that was totally strange to me, and very fascinating to me. I didn't know England very well, so it was rather the same thing in reverse: I wasn't too close, I was at a considerable distance away. I found English society very strange, but I was able to pick it up reasonably accurately. Then, after several books, I realized that Ireland was falling into perspective, so I began writing about Ireland.

INTERVIEWER

Did growing up as a Protestant in southern Ireland make you examine religious belief in an intense sort of way?

TREVOR

No. What is now apparent to me is that being a Protestant in Ireland was a *help*, because it began the process of being an outsider—which I think all writers have to be—and began the process of trying to clear the fog away. I didn't belong to the new post-1923 Catholic society, and I also didn't belong to the Irish Ascendancy. I'm a small-town Irish Protestant, a "lace-curtain" Protestant. Poor Protestants in Ireland are a sliver of people caught between the past—Georgian Ireland with its great houses and all the rest of it—and the new, bustling, Catholic state. Without knowing any of this, without its ever occurring to me, I was able to see things a little more clearly than I would have if I had belonged to either of those worlds. When I write about, say, a Catholic commercial traveler, I can almost feel myself going back to those days—to an observation point. And when I write about the Ascendancy I am again observing. Elizabeth Bowen writes of her family employing boys from the local town, Mitchelstown, where I was born, to stand round the tennis court collecting the balls. I would have been one of those little Protestant boys, had I been the right age. There was a certain amount of "cutaway-ness" that has been a help. Certainly it feels like that, looking back at this very small group of not well-off Irish Protestants. Dis-

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placed persons in a way—which is really very similar to what a writer should be, whether he likes it or not.

INTERVIEWER

You've spoken about religion in a social context, but not about religion as religion.

TREVOR

I didn't come from what you'd call a particularly religious background. But Ireland is a religious country, and in those days everyone went to mass or church. It was just all taken for granted. It didn't really impinge in any sort of way, except that one felt different as a Protestant.

INTERVIEWER

There are a lot of priests in your books.

TREVOR

There are a lot of priests in Ireland—and a lot of nuns. The first school I went to was a convent, and I liked the nuns very much. I had quite a lot to do with the Catholic Church, although I've never been seriously tempted to join it. English writers like Graham Greene, for instance, and Evelyn Waugh, became Catholics because they were frustrated. But Ireland being a religious country, the religious side of people is satisfied more naturally than it is in England.

INTERVIEWER

Are you religious?

TREVOR

I don't really think of myself as religious . . . I only ever go to church in Ireland. I don't like the Church of England. I feel much more drawn towards Catholicism when I'm in England —not that I'd do anything about it. I always feel that Protestantism in England is strangely connected with the military. All the cathedrals here are full of military honors. It's part of an establishment with the armed forces; tombs, rolls of honor,

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that sort of thing. It's a strange combination. The Protestant Church of Ireland is a shrunken, withered little church that I'm quite attracted by.

INTERVIEWER

There is a strong element of faith in your work, of people coping, enduring, of being borne along in their lives. Is it humanist or spiritual faith?

TREVOR

I don't think it is humanist; I think it is just a kind of primitive belief in God. I think that certainly occurs in my books. I'm always saying that my books are religious; nobody ever agrees with me. I think there is a sort of God-bothering that goes on from time to time in my books. People often attack God, say what an unkind and cruel figure he is. It is outside formal religion; the people who talk about it aren't, generally speaking, religious people, but there is a bothering, a gnawing, nagging thing.

INTERVIEWER

Other People's Worlds was like that, with Julia's worry for Francis's daughter, Joy.

TREVOR

That's the sort of thing I mean.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think of other contemporary writers?

TREVOR

I don't read a lot of contemporary writing. I reread Dickens and George Eliot, and Jane Austen. I've always been attracted by American writers, particularly American short-story writers. I admire F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Faulkner, John Updike. And I like Carson McCullers, Mary McCarthy, and Tennessee Williams—his prose rather than his plays. Of Irish writers, I'm particularly fond of George Moore and James

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Stephens, and the stories of Joyce, whom I've already mentioned. I rarely read anything in translation because I feel I'm missing so much. But I do reread Proust. And Mauriac.

INTERVIEWER

What quality do you admire in American writers?

TREVOR

A kind of freshness, and directness.

INTERVIEWER

What about contemporary English writers?

TREVOR

I'm a great admirer of the late Elizabeth Taylor. Of Graham Greene, Ivy Compton-Burnett, Anthony Powell, the short stories of V.S. Pritchett. The test of literary admiration is whether or not you reread. I reread all those writers, and Henry Green and Evelyn Waugh. They've all created characters that have become hooked into my imagination, like real people. Of contemporary Irish writing, I read mainly short stories—by almost everyone writing them.

INTERVIEWER

Has England had any particular effect on your writing?

TREVOR

I don't think I'd write in quite the same way if I hadn't moved to England. I think English eccentricity is what first attracted me in terms of writing—it was that that made me wonder and muse about this country.

INTERVIEWER

How did you get to know about the eccentricity in *The Old Boys*? Had you taught at a public school?

TREVOR

I really had to imagine—by a process which is part of a fiction writer's paraphernalia—what boys I remembered at

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school would be like when they were old. I found it very amusing to wonder what So-and-so would become like. They became something like what they *were* . . . little boys sitting at desks. I have never believed in the axiom that a writer should first and foremost write about what he knows. I think it's a piece of misinformation.

INTERVIEWER

What's the difference between an Irish eccentric and an English eccentric?

TREVOR

That's difficult to say—it's like asking what the difference is between English humor and Irish humor. It's a dry quality that you get with English eccentricity at its best; Irish eccentricity is much more outlandish. Crazier. English eccentricity is something you hardly notice until all of a sudden you realize that you're in the presence of an eccentric mind. It's not like that at all with an Irish eccentric; you know about it all very easily and quickly. English eccentricity has a suburban quality—it's like a very neatly-trimmed garden in which you suddenly realize that the flower beds aren't what they seem to be. There's a kind of well-turned-out quality about English eccentricity, whereas the Irish equivalent is higgledy-piggledy, and sometimes even noisy. The marvel of the English version is that it's almost secretive. I've never quite believed in the obvious English eccentric, the man who comes into the pub every night and is known to be a dear old eccentric. I always suspect that that is probably self-invention. What I do believe in is the person who scarcely knows he's eccentric at all. Then he says something so extraordinary and you realize he perhaps lives in a world that is untouched by the world you share with him.

INTERVIEWER

What is your definition of a short story?

TREVOR

I think it is the art of the glimpse. If the novel is like an intricate Renaissance painting, the short story is an Impressionist

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painting. It *should* be an explosion of truth. Its strength lies in what it leaves out just as much as what it puts in, if not more. It is concerned with the total exclusion of meaninglessness. Life, on the other hand, is meaningless most of the time. The novel imitates life, where the short story is bony, and cannot wander. It is essential art.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think your Irish stories differ fundamentally from your English and Italian stories?

TREVOR

Yes, I do. There is a sense of community in the Irish short stories that doesn't exist in the others. In the Irish stories people tend to talk to each other, whereas in the English ones people talk *at* each other. The English are much more oblique; we Irish are more direct. This is not meant as any profound observation, but it is often those little things about people of different nationalities that tell so much and are so effective in fiction. Ireland is so old-fashioned that it almost belongs to another age. It is about fifty years behind England—and at the same time it is a Third World country, where it snows in winter. Things happen there very quickly, and the old values, alongside those changes, form a fascinating mixture.

INTERVIEWER

You have never created a hero. Why is that?

TREVOR

Because I find them dull. Heroes don't really belong in short stories. As Frank O'Connor said, "Short stories are about little people," and I agree. I find the unheroic side of people much richer and more entertaining than black-and-white success.

INTERVIEWER

Time plays a part in both your stories and your novels—the things that have happened to characters in the past, the effect of time passing. How important is that past?

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TREVOR

A huge amount of what I write about is internal, a drifting back into childhood, based on a small event or a moment. By isolating an encounter and then isolating an incident in the past you try to build up an actual life, and you cannot build up a life without using time in that sense. I think of a short story very much as a portrait.

INTERVIEWER

Is time a destroyer or a preserver?

TREVOR

Both. It both heals and destroys, depending on the nature of the wound; it actually reveals the character. There is either bitterness or recovery: neither can take place without time. Time is the most interesting thing to write about besides people—everything I write about has to do with it. Time is like air; it is there always, changing people and forming character. Memory also forms character—the way you remember things makes you who you are. People struggle to share a very private side of themselves with other people. It is that great difficulty that I often write about.

INTERVIEWER

Why?

TREVOR

I don't know, and I say that because I don't want to get it wrong. Truth is the most important thing that there is, and if you lose sight of it, your writing will be destroyed in the end.

INTERVIEWER

You have done quite a number of adaptations of your works for the stage, television and radio. How do you feel about the imposition of actors' faces and voices on your characters?

TREVOR

The actual physical appearance of people creates a "jerk" in the communication of the story, it changes the gear of the

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story. The audience has to work much less hard, and you cease to address a vital part of their imagination. The part of their imagination engaged by reading a description lies completely dormant. You let the audience off the hook. Radio, on the other hand, works much better for me since it is only the actor's voice that comes between the audience and its imagination.

INTERVIEWER

Has moving down here to Devon changed the way you work at all?

TREVOR

Not really. It hasn't made any difference at all. It doesn't matter to me where I live and work. I work in the mornings, and I'd do that anywhere—hotels, or anywhere.

INTERVIEWER

When do you get up?

TREVOR

Well, I used to get up at four o'clock and do most of my work—expecially in the summer—between half-past four and breakfast-time. But I stopped doing that some time ago—it had become just straightforward punishment. I now start work at about twenty minutes to eight and work until about twelve, and I might do a little more later in the day.

INTERVIEWER

Do you work on a typewriter?

TREVOR

Yes, I do, and also in longhand. I do a lot of rewriting. I find that the more versions you see of, say, the beginning of a chapter—blue paper, white paper, typed, longhand—the more you get it right in the end. This is a tremendously long-winded way of saying you have to become familiar with what

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you're doing, so that in the end you practically know the whole thing by heart. After a certain time it becomes so familiar that you know exactly where to look for this bit or that bit and you know at once if it's wrong. But more importantly, really, you know the characters inside out. You know what day it is when he did such and such a thing, what her favorite flowers are, the pattern of wrinkles on her face. I can't do that unless I've spent ages with a novel, or a story. One of the big differences between the two is that the novel is a very different subject for me to *see round*, to the end of it. But you can see round a short story long before it's finished, and feel what it's going to be like. I have to create for the novel a tremendous amount of raw material, and then cut the novel out of it. I write novels the way films are made. I literally cut with a pair of scissors. In *Fools of Fortune* there is a character who disappears for years; I know where he went, and I've written all that and abandoned it. But I couldn't have written the novel without knowing what he'd done, and where he was. But that's an extreme example. A better one is knowing, say, what someone has done during a week it doesn't tell you about in the book.

INTERVIEWER

You actually write all that down and throw it out?

TREVOR

I write incidents and scenes over and over again until eventually they are completely clear to me. For a reader it would be boring to know all those details, so the details in the end just wither away, after you've picked out the ones that you want . . . but *you* know how he's perambulated round a particular room, and what she does after he goes, or whatever it happens to be. And, of course, the bits that *aren't* there are just as important as the bits that *are* there, because they're deliberately left out. You keep back from the reader the fact that she went down to the kitchen and boiled an egg. You don't want to say so because it is somehow important that that is left for the reader to imagine.

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INTERVIEWER

Do readers write to you often and tell you what they think of your stories?

TREVOR

Yes, they do.

INTERVIEWER

Do you keep up a correspondence with them?

TREVOR

You can't, really; it's too time-absorbing. It's very difficult to keep up a correspondence with a lot of people.

INTERVIEWER

What is your own favorite among your works?

TREVOR

My favorite work is always the last one that I've done. I suppose it's the same thing as a new-born child being your favorite for a short time because it's so fragile. The other ones are hardened old things by now, and they can get about on their own. I don't really have any favorites. But if I keep on disliking a story or being unhappy about it, it generally means that the story isn't any good.

INTERVIEWER

Do you find it difficult to write from a woman's point of view?

TREVOR

No, I don't find it difficult. It's the same thing as writing about elderly people when you're not elderly yourself—I was quite young when I wrote *The Old Boys*. It would seem to me very dull to write only about personal experience. I wrote about elderly people out of a sense of curiosity. I want to know what it's like to be old, what it's like to cross a room when your

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limbs are all seized up. And similarly, I want to know what it's like to be woman, so again I write out of a sense of curiosity. Now, as I'm getting older myself, I tend to write more about children, because it's been such a long time since I was a child. It's a slightly different process, but it does belong to the same obsession.

INTERVIEWER

Do you ever feel you're trying to stretch too far, or get in over your head with characters and find yourself unable to discover what it is that makes them tick?

TREVOR

Yes, I do do that, quite often. In fact, I become involved in a story which doesn't seem to be working, and it's usually not working for that very reason. The character I've invented simply won't be explored, and there's nothing I can do about it. I find that I'm saying to myself, "I can't find anything interesting in this man. He belongs to somebody else." What generally happens then is that man becomes a tiny walk-on part. And I realize that the story—or some other character in it—interests me more than the man I started out with.

INTERVIEWER

It's almost disturbing the way in which you are able to get inside such a varied cast of characters, regardless of their age, sex, or background. It seems somewhat diabolical, the way you're able to enter so easily into these characters' thoughts; how could you know so much about the way all these different people live? It seems a bit like a ventriloquist who is able to throw his voice into anything. Is it the case that the better you become as a writer the more you feel a need to stretch yourself in more difficult ways, the more bizarre and complex a character you must create? I've always wondered how you came to understand the character, at what point you understood his motivations, why a woman wore the color cherry red, what it was that illuminated their world. How do you get there?

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TREVOR

Well, it does seem to me that the only way you can get there is through observation. I don't think there is any other route. And what you observe is not quite like just meeting someone on a train, having a conversation and then going away. I mean, really, it's a kind of adding up of people you notice. I think there's something *in* writers of fiction that makes them notice things and store them away all the time. You *notice* the cherry red. Writers of fiction are collectors of useless information. They are the opposite of good, solid, wise citizens who collect good information and put it to good use. Fiction writers remember tiny little details, some of them almost malicious, but very telling. It's a way of endlessly remembering. A face comes back after years and years and years, as though you've taken a photograph. It's as though you have, for the moment, thought: "I know that person very well." You could argue that you have some extraordinary insight, but actually it's just a very hard-working imagination. It's almost like a stress in you that goes on, nibbling and nibbling, gnawing away at you, in a *very* inquisitive way, wanting to know. And of course while all that's happening you're stroking in the colors, putting a line here and a line there, creating something which moves further and further away from the original. The truth emerges, the person who is created is a different person altogether—a person in their own right.

INTERVIEWER

You've said that when you start a story, rather than starting with language, the story often begins with a physical event, something you see or overhear which ignites something in you.

TREVOR

Often it does occur like that, but the truth is that stories begin in all kinds of ways. With a remembered schoolteacher, or someone who might later have had something to do with your life, or some unimportant occurrence. You begin to write and in the process of writing it is often the case that whatever it was that started you off gets lost. On other occasions, stories

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simply come out of nowhere: you never discover the source. I remember being on a train and I was perhaps walking down to the bar when I noticed a woman and a boy traveling together. He was in his school uniform and she was clearly in charge of him. I can remember now the fatigue on her face. Afterwards—probably years afterwards—I wrote a story called "Going Home."

INTERVIEWER

Do you know how a story is going to end before you write it?

TREVOR

That's what I mean by being able to see round it. I can see approximately—but only very approximately—how it will be. With a novel I can't even do that. A novel is like a cathederal and you really can't carry in your imagination the form a cathedral is to take. I like the inkling, the shadow, of a new short story. I like the whole business of establishing its point, for although a story need not have a plot it must have a point. I'm a short-story writer, really, who happens to write novels. Not the other way around.

INTERVIEWER

Have you been particularly pleased with any of your novels?

TREVOR

No, I'm not terribly pleased with anything.

INTERVIEWER

Have you surprised yourself with the way any of them have turned out?

TREVOR

Yes, mainly because there are an awful lot of changes. Your own standpoint, and the importance of certain characters, seem to change as you write a novel; some characters become very big, and some characters become very small, and some incidents don't occur at all. None of that happens so much

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with short stories. Short stories tend to be more predictable because you know approximately where you're going, so there's not so much alteration. You surprise yourself only when you realize that you've been doing it wrong. That's what I mean by experimenting, and also by lack of confidence—if you don't allow yourself to be wrong, you're not going to get anywhere. In a way, you're always trying to be wrong. You're trying to do it in a wrong way in order to find the right way of doing it, so you can then say, "*That*, at least, is not possible." It's all very exhausting.

INTERVIEWER

Do you have to concentrate very hard when you try to gauge the motivations or imagine the interior workings of some particularly complex character—for example, the teenage boy in *The Children of Dynmouth*—or does it come easily?

TREVOR

No, I don't think that that is a matter of concentration at all. I think in fact, that oddly enough, if you try to concentrate and are too intense about it, you lose it. I think you have to be much more relaxed and loose about it. It's instinctive, and I'm an instinctive writer anyway. I think if I sat down and screwed my eyes up and *thought* too hard about what a psychopath is like, it wouldn't work. I prefer to let things take me by surprise. It's rather like wondering casually why a friend suddenly behaves in a strange way, or in a way you didn't imagine him capable of.

INTERVIEWER

You're very good at middle-aged women, their daydreams and so on. Sometimes I wonder if you weren't a middle-aged woman in a former life.

TREVOR

I don't know if you've noticed that when middle-aged women talk they are particularly revealing. And I'm quite a good listener. I sometimes become fascinated by what a wom-

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an is telling me—something which, in fact, is rather dull and mundane. It's her selection of detail that's interesting, why she chooses this rather than that, and why she wants to tell a stranger. Men do exactly the same thing, of course. Well, the thing is, the people are there. They are there to be seen, all you have to do is wonder about them. I think you can understand a psychopath. It's not particularly that I'm interested in that stratum of society; it's just I've always found heroes, and perhaps glamorous people, to be too glittery. Quite often, in fact, I do write about people who are rather glamorous—middle-aged women very heavily made-up—but that glamor is a false one: I find it interesting because of that.

INTERVIEWER

If I may reduce your work to being *about* something, it seems to be about people coming to terms with things. I wonder if you think that's right, first of all, and if you think that is the ultimate thing that can be done with what we have, a coming to terms, or an acceptance?

TREVOR

Do you mean a sort of settling for second best?

INTERVIEWER

Sometimes that *could* be the way it's taken, but at other times indeed much more than that, that it is in fact a tremendous act of bravery to accept in this way.

TREVOR

Yes, I suppose that does come in a bit. I don't think on my part it's a conscious conclusion. I don't think I ever think like that when I'm writing the piece of a story which implies that people come to terms with something. I'm still working out what they would do, still believing that this is what happens because I know it happens. That is probably the difference between an instinctive writer—I don't know what other word to use—and an intellectual writer. I have no messages or anything like that; I have no philosophy and I don't impose on

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my characters anything more than the predicament they find themselves in. That seems to me to be quite enough to go along with. I'm known for not commenting very much, for keeping myself fairly quiet. Even that is not a choice; it is not something I have chosen to do, it is just the way I do it. If I tried to do it some other way, I think it would be a mess. I simply stick to my own particular piece of knitting.

INTERVIEWER

Do you agree with what some critics have called a sense of "hopelesssness" in your characters?

TREVOR

Well, some characters are pretty hopeless in themselves. Others find themselves in hopeless situations. There doesn't seem to be very much going for them, as it were; that's also true. But generally speaking that's true in life. There is a certain amount of hope, not an endless supply. It's not as rose-tinted a world as most people would like it to be. But the people in my stories and novels are not ragingly desperate; they have, as you said a moment ago, come to terms, and coming to terms in itself is quite an achievement. There's not a total absence of hope there. It's not an entirely pessimistic view, I think. In fact, it's even faintly optimistic.

INTERVIEWER

I read somewhere that you describe yourself as a melancholic; how does this manifest itself? Is it a state, a temperament through which you write?

TREVOR

I don't ever recall referring to myself as a melancholic—I would rephrase that, with the chicken farming too. A melancholic chicken farmer suggests suicide to me. I don't think you can write fiction unless you know something about happiness, melancholy—almost everything which human nature touches. I doubt that an overwhelmingly jolly, optimistic person has ever been an artist of any short. You are made melancholy,

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more than anything, by the struggle you have with words—the struggle you have with trying to express what sometimes resists expression. It can be a melancholy business. As a fiction writer, every time you go out into the day you've also got to experience the bleakness of night. If I were purely a melancholic I don't think I'd write at all. I don't think writers can allow themselves the luxury of being depressives for long. Writers are far less interesting than everyone would have them. They have typewriters and will travel. They sit at desks in a clerk-like way. What may or may not be interesting is what we write. The same applies to any artist; we are the tools and instruments of our talent. We are outsiders; we have no place in society because society is what we're watching, and dealing with. Other people make their way in the world. They climb up ladders and get to the top. They know ambition, they seek power. I certainly don't have any ambitions, nor am I in the least interested in power. I don't think fiction writers tend to be. Certainly not as a civil servant may be, or an engineer. Fiction writers don't *want* in the same way; their needs are different. Personally, I like not being noticed. I like to hang about the shadows of the world both as a writer and as a person; I dislike limelight, and the center of things is a place to watch rather than become involved in. I dwell upon it rather than in it; I wonder about what occurs there and record what I see because that seems to be my role. I get matters down onto paper and impose a pattern, and all of that is a fairly ordinary activity, or so it seems to be. If I could analyze all this, if I could really talk about it, I don't think I'd be writing at all. It's invading the gray-haired woman, the child, the elderly man, that keeps me going and delights me; but I don't know how I do it. And I believe that mystery is essential. Again, if you now ask me why, I won't be able to tell you.

INTERVIEWER

Archibald MacLeish once accused both Fitzgerald and Hemingway of behaving like glorified journalists dancing around outside of what they saw as being "ultimate reality" and taking notes. MacLeish claims that the important thing

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for a writer is not curiosity and observation, but deep knowledge of one's self. What do you make of that?

TREVOR

What is very interesting about that is when he talks about making notes he makes it sound rather ridiculous; but in fact notes are made simply because people forget things. I don't use notes very often, but writers have at all times made notes in order to remind themselves of something. When he talks about "dancing around the outside" he actually describes *exactly* what fiction writers have to do. You've got to be like a journalist from a newspaper, and personally the last person I want to know about is myself. I always think a very good example of an artist is Henry Moore. Henry Moore was somebody who disliked being in the limelight. Even to look at him, you felt that he seemed to be pressing backwards, always in a hurry to get back to his work. He was opposed to the artist as represented by the flamboyant, noisy figure. I am totally uninterested in myself.

INTERVIEWER

Critics have been incredibly supportive and enthusiastic about your work. How do you react to that? Do you trust them?

TREVOR

When I was younger, like all young writers, I used to read the critics, but I don't read them much anymore. So if you told me that they'd all turned savagely against me, I wouldn't have known. If I'm abroad and a batch of notices arrives, then it's quite fun to read them all, but I never go out now and buy a newspaper specially on the day something is published. Sometimes when critics say a lot of nice things they have actually got hold of the wrong end of the stick, just as somebody who is very hostile may have too. But that doesn't mean that the sweet critic is any better than the other one. There are particularly good critics who are not always favorable, who are very

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balanced, and sharp, and know what they're doing, and you know they're quite right. But nearly always you would have been more severe yourself.

INTERVIEWER

What do you think are your own shortcomings as a writer?

TREVOR

That tends to bring us back to analysis. I most certainly have shortcomings, but I don't particularly want to identify them.

INTERVIEWER

Are you writing at full throttle at the moment?

TREVOR

Oh, no. I would never use that description. A very, very *slow* throttle of some sort. No, you can never tell, actually, whether or not you might have lost your grasp entirely. Only time can tell you that. I'm a great believer in looking back on things. In retrospect, experiences, like everything else, change; it's the same with writing. I write very swiftly, but also very slowly, because I hold on to things for a very long time. I will put away a short story when I've written it, and not look at it for months and months. When I take it out again and read it, it's sometimes as though I am just another reader. I'll do some rewriting and put it away again. That's where confidence works the other way round. You must have confidence in your skill as a craftsman, I think. Not confidence that you're going to be right every time; but you have to be confident in saying to yourself, "Only I really know how this works, because I made it."

INTERVIEWER

Do you think it takes anything different to become a writer now than it did when you were starting out?

TREVOR

It shouldn't. If you've got something to say as a writer, as

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James Thurber would put it, it somehow should come out. I don't really think that it's become any more difficult for writers, rather the opposite, really.

INTERVIEWER

So you don't think literature has been much diminished by the glare of TV, cinema, video, and by entertainment hunger?

TREVOR

I think there is a danger of that. In a way it depends on your mood how you answer that question; if you're cross about it then you tend to say, "I wish there was more seriousness about." And by serious writing I mean everything from Thomas Hardy to P. G. Wodehouse, from Chekhov to Sean O'Faolain. Instead of that, there's now the pressure of fashion in literature, and I imagine that is something that's demanded by your entertainment-hungry public. Fashion belongs on a coat hanger. In literature—in any art—it's destructive. Some of the prizes that have crept on to the British literary scene have made rather a circus of literature. It's nice to win them, and all money freely given to the arts is a good thing. But prizes and best-seller lists and fashion tend to *tell* people what to read, and it's discovering what to read for yourself that lends reading half its pleasure. Glamor and glossiness are not what literature is about. Literature is Thomas Hardy, who wasn't fashionable in the least. He ate his guts out in Dorset, and was miserable, and produced marvelous books; in the end, only the books matter. Nowadays, books tend to be shoveled into a chat-show wheelbarrow, more talked-about than read.

INTERVIEWER

Has there been any time when you've been able to figure out what it is that you want to *do* as a writer, what you're aiming at?

TREVOR

Well, to be completely honest, I wouldn't have any such aim

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at all. I don't have any general ambition. I don't really want to make any statement. I see the writing of a story as creating an impression, and that impression is going to communicate itself to somebody else. That's all I seek to do.

—**Mira Stout**

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Marilyn Hacker

Two Cities

I

The streetlights bent
the sleet streams as I went
up the deserted Rue des Deux Ponts,

the only one
except two boy drunks on
the steep slope of Rue Cardinal Lemoine.

I took the sharp
turn toward the Place de la Contrescarpe.
Firelight shimmered in the rain. A group

of tramps, five men,
two women, warmed their hands
over an open fire in an oil-drum.

Rain beat down hard.
A bear-man with a beard
passed the glistening bottle of *pinard*

to an old one
who tipped it. Her red cheeks shone
like a child's, come in from the sun.

I had both your
keys for the Rue Tournefort,
and my own, for back across the river.

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It cleared my head
when I walked from desk to bed,
rive droite, *rive gauche*, the distance I needed.

That "worst winter
in decades," crossing the center
of Paris, I was the inventor

of my own life,
an old plane tree in new leaf,
a young woman almost forty-five.

II

When I was sick
I stayed under the thick
couch cover, with the electric

fire on three bars,
drapes pulled to muffle cars
and buses passing, a sweatshirt (yours)

keeping my arms
warm while I read. A rainstorm
chewed on last night's snow; a fire alarm

ripped the thick air
outside, not my interior
weather. Earl Grey with milk. Dusk fell at four-

thirty. Neighbors
pulling shopping carts upstairs
stopped with the 90-year-old next door

eager to un-
latch for the Rue Saint-Antoine
gossip with her evening bread and wine.

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Tiny, bird-boned,
daily, she'd done her own
errands seven decades living alone

until she slipped
on iced stairs and cracked her hip.
She wants the food less than the gossip.

Hands round my cup,
I thought how you'd come up-
stairs too in three hours. We'd cut bread, ladle soup,

pour wine, refill
the glasses for my cold, your chilled
hands, lie down to sleep together until

her radio
at six AM let us know
the night had come and gone next door also.

III

The carrot-top
above the mom-and-pop
hardware shook out her dust-mop,

a cigarette
in her mouth. Three years, I'd yet
to see her dressed. She slapped a small carpet

on the worked rail,
square in a square nightshirt. The trail
of dust and ashes floated past the mail

truck, sun-yellow,
leg-up on the curb, pillowed
on grimy snow. In the window below,

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a grey woman
checked what the shoppers had on
and buttoned up a black cardigan.

Two boys, short pants,
school satchels on their backs, danced
with cold at the bus stop, rubbing their hands.

In the dormer
window of the former
maid's room, chinked rags kept somebody warmer.

A flock of grey
clouds at roof-peak skirled away.
The blue banner of a windy day

unfurled while I
poured a fresh cup of coffee
laced with hot milk, and sat and watched it fly.

IV

Nine months later,
on a terrace with my daughter,
eating *moules*, we saw the bluejeaned waiter

abruptly turn
his gorgeous Euro-African
profile towards upper Broadway, where a young,

or not young, blonde
cursed out the night around
her, and someone who'd knocked her down.

Drunk? Crack? Her mind?
She slashed in front, behind
herself with a slim cane. "I think she's blind!"

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Iva whispered
as the woman disappeared
past the balcony. As if she'd heard,

she turned, came back,
cheeks slack, grey anorak
in September, brandishing her stick.

She lunged with it
and raked the table opposite
us. Plates crashed, glass shattered. "Damn you, you shit!"

addressed to no
one specific. When you know
the words so well, they're not vivid *argot*,

only despair
as the beautiful waiter
vaulted the rail, pinioned her there

till the cop van
came. The couple got free wine
at a fresh table while the floor was cleaned.

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Portfolio

Untitled

Stephen Frailey

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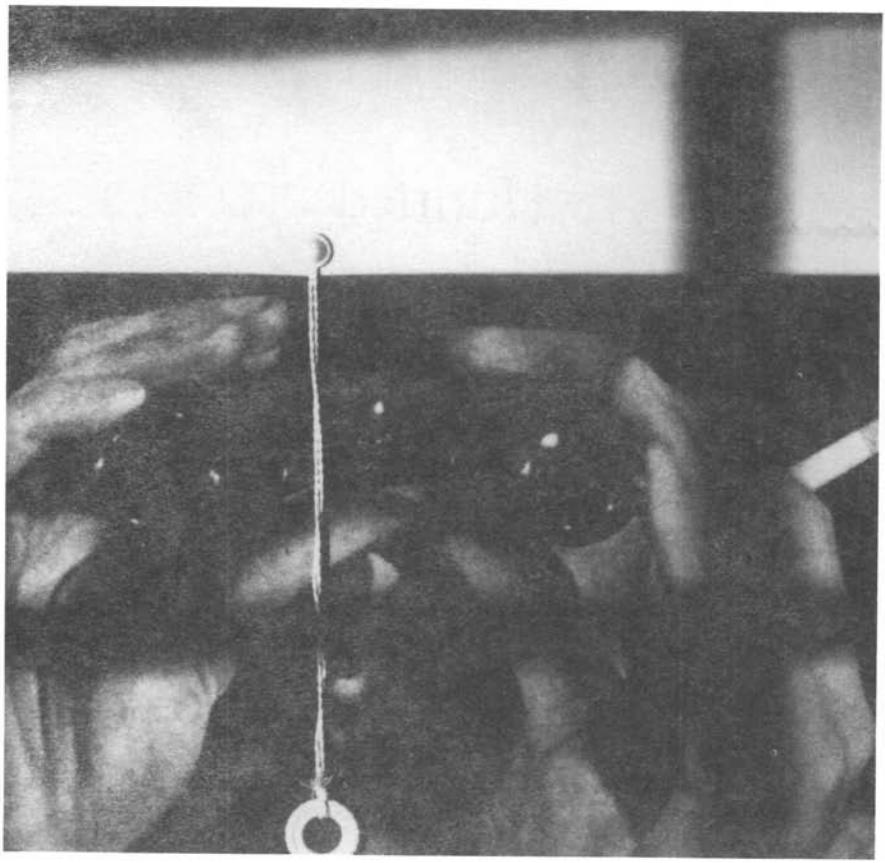

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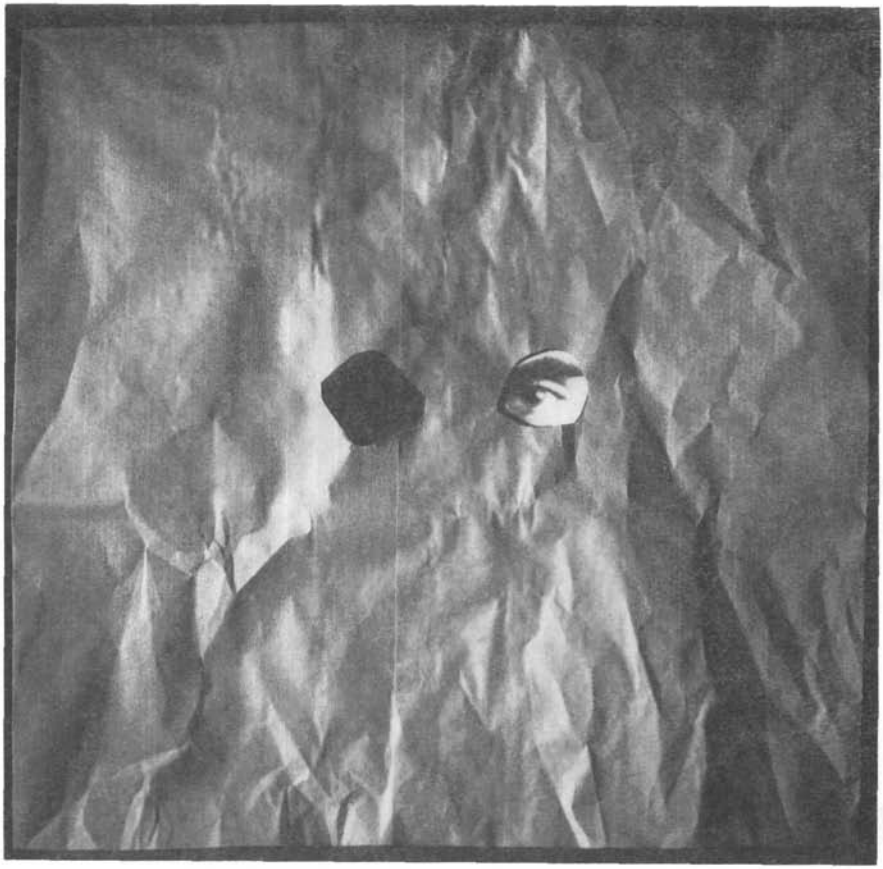

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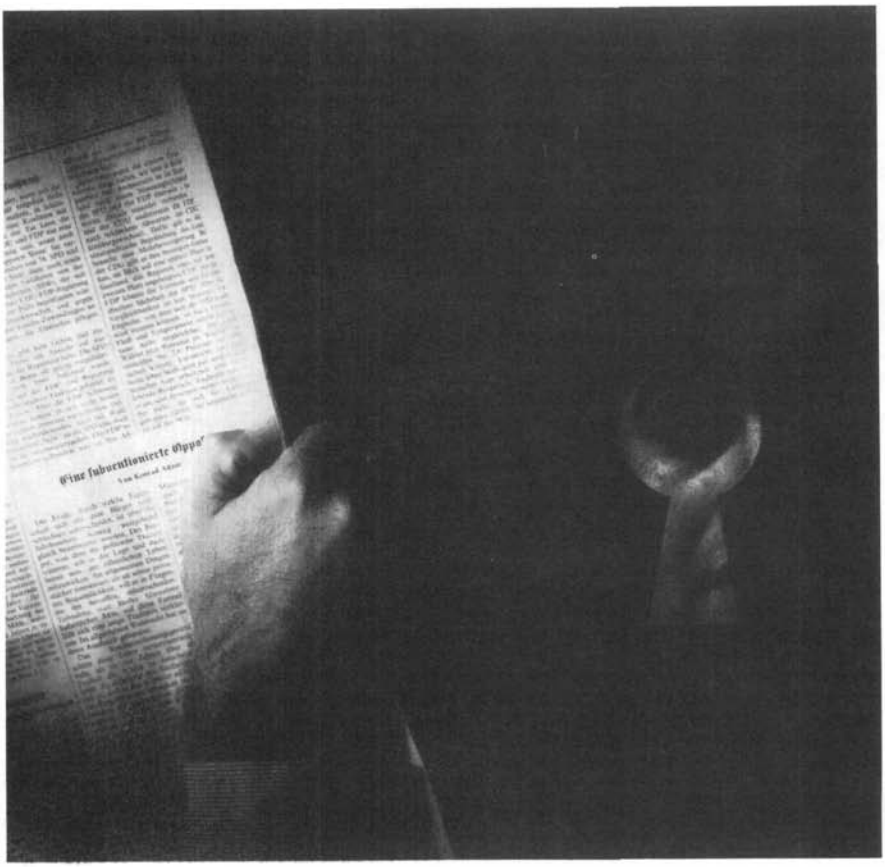

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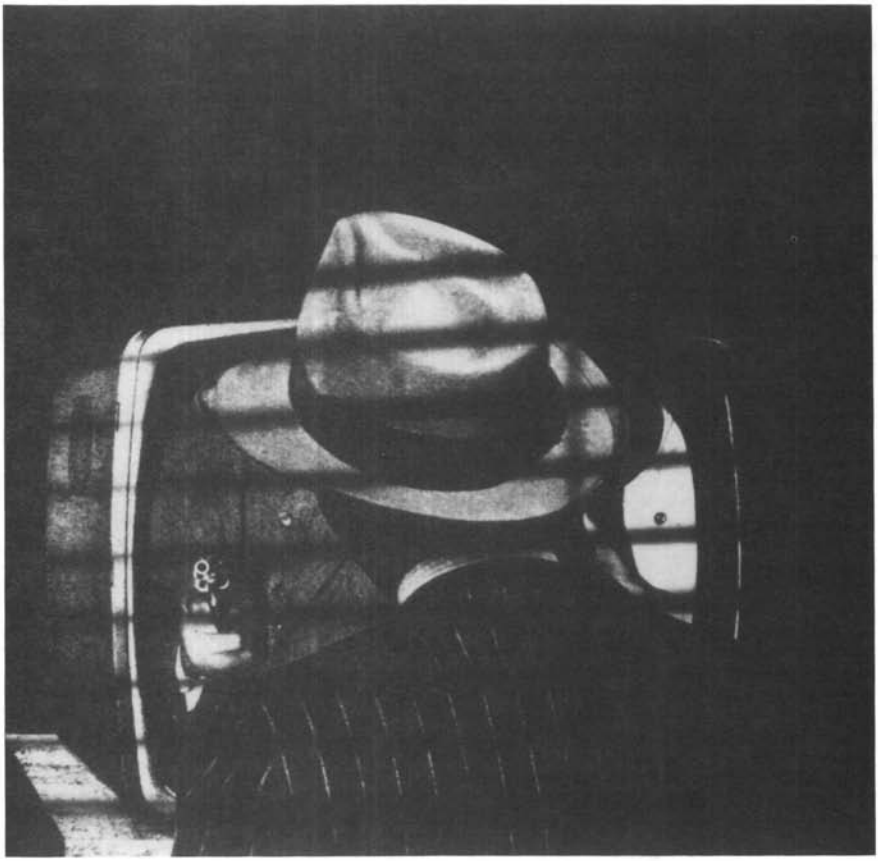

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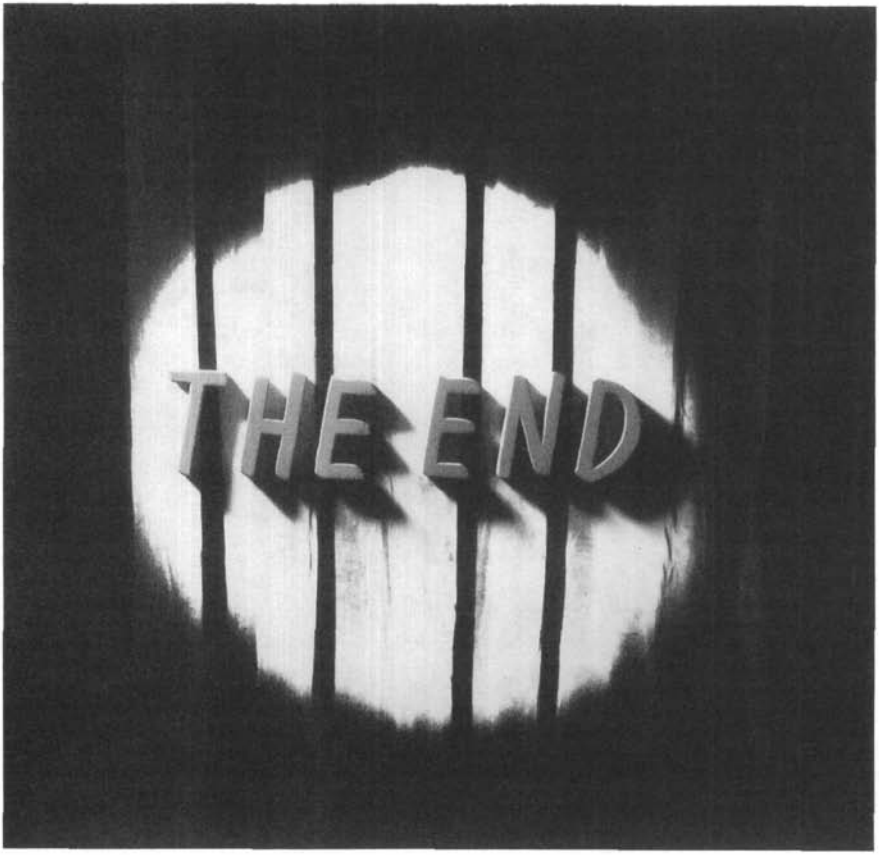

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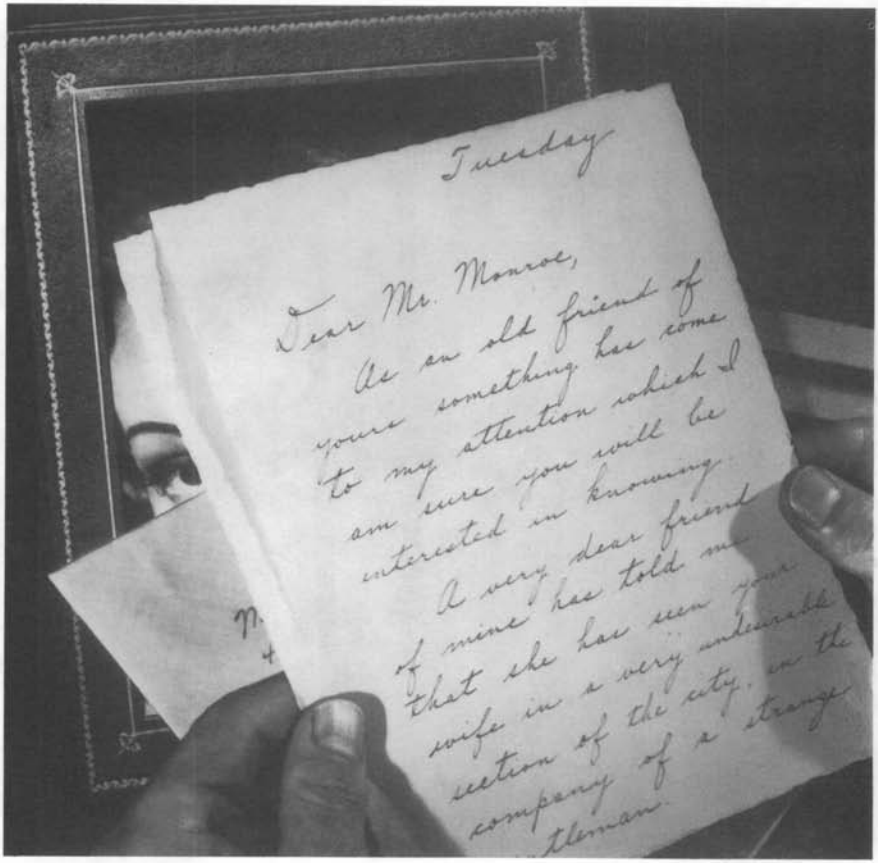
Tuesday
Dear Mr. Monroe,
As an old friend of
yours something has come
to my attention which I
am sure you will be
interested in knowing.
A very dear friend
of mine has told me
that she has seen your
wife in a very unusual
section of the city, in the
company of a strange
gentleman.

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Five Poems by Aleksandar Ristović

To a Fool

What you know, O fool, no one else does.
And what no one else knows,
I am not equal to.

Truly, what is it you've got in your head, fool,
while you shuck corn into a wooden bowl
or nudge some bug in the direction of a girl's arm?

The key has turned twice in the lock.
The menu of amorous services lies open on the table
next to the soup, a pair of sheer stockings and a rose.

Lazybones, you go to another extreme:
Between Something and Nothing you chose that which in truth is Nothing!
A little chitchat under the covers, or one's own breath on the round windowpane.

They'll grab you under the arms,
these fellows who come running in city clothes wearing badges
and take you out into the fields where her body twists and turns in various seductive poses.

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Old Motif

For whom are you intended, wine in the corked bottle
on a white tablecloth,
next to some swaying flowers,
while a young girl sweeps the still empty room?

You'll untie the tongue of the silent one,
make the fool into a wise man,
and to the weakling you'll give courage
to act on his secret desire.

Out of the wise man you'll make a foolish one
who squanders his wealth among the much-pampered
servants and flunkies
and who promises the big-breasted cashier
a house with pine needles on the floor.

Perhaps you'll turn the head of a beautiful woman
so that she'll quit the table for one of the upstairs rooms
followed by some worthless fellow
who makes up verses with only one thing in mind.

For a time, perhaps, you'll change the old man
into that youth in the tavern,
who sings and taps his foot,
while frequently visiting the lavatory to flirt with the one
busy counting the small coins in a cigar box.

For whom are you intended, wine in the corked bottle?
Through whose veins will you send your merry little flame,
making him see the most ordinary things
in many strange and unaccustomed ways?

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Landscape With Snow

What makes your hand so skilled, pig butcher,
that the one who just a moment ago had a desperate look
now gazes at you humbly and almost with trust?

With its head thrown back and its ears cocked,
your beauty watches the morning sun which has the shape
of a blade, while you press her between your knees
without letting the cigarette go from your mouth.

What's the reason for your sudden laughter, butcher,
while you stand next to that which only a moment ago was
living, peeling her skin off as if it were an expensive dress
and sticking your greasy hands into her womb?

Truly, what's the reason for your silence
at the table with the white cover and a blurred glass of wine,
while country fiddles resound throughout the house
and people whisper among themselves concerning some
unknown event?

You sit in the sled tucked in rich covers, butcher,
dressed the way a pig butcher is supposed to be dressed,
and stroking the thin neck of a farmer's daughter, her ears
and round limbs,
while around you the snow keeps falling.

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Happiness

The mouse is golden,
and so is the turtle, and the spider,
and even the centipede,
and the pebble with which you try
to get rid of it
without leaving your seat,
from which one can observe many other
things and golden beings.

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Out in the Open

While crossing a field,
someone who in that instant
is preoccupied with thoughts of suicide
is forced by nature's call
to delay the act,
and so finds himself enjoying
some blades of grass
from a squatting position,
as if seeing them for the first time
from that close,
while his cheeks redden,
and he struggles to pull a sheet of paper
out of his pocket
with its already composed
farewell note.

—translated from the Serbian
by Charles Simic

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Dramas

Edna O'Brien

When the new shopkeeper arrived in the village he aroused great curiosity along with some scorn. He was deemed refined because his fingernails looked as if they had been varnished a tinted ivory. He had a horse, or as my father was quick to point out, a glorified pony, which he had brought from the Midlands, where he had previously worked. The pony was called Daisy, a name unheard of in our circles, for an animal. The shopkeeper wore a long black coat, a black hat, talked in a low voice, made his own jams and marmalades and could even darn and sew. All that we came to know of, in due course, but at first we only knew him as Barry. In time the shop would have his name, printed in beautiful silver sloping script, above the door. He had bought the long-disused bakery, had all the ovens thrown out and turned it into a palace which not only had gadgets, but gadgets that worked, a lethal slicer for the ham, a new kind of weighing scale that did not require iron weights hefted onto one side, but that simply registered the weight of a bag of meal and told it by a needle that spun round, wobbling dementedly before coming to a stand-still. Even farmers praised its miraculous skills. He also had a meat

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safe with a grey gauze door, a safe in which creams and cheeses could be kept fresh for an age, free of the scourge of flies or gnats.

Straight away he started to do great business as the people reneged on the shops where they had dealt for years and where many of them owed money. They flocked, to look at him, to hear his well-mannered voice and to admire dainties and things that he had in stock. He had ten different flavored jellies and more than one brand of coffee. The women especially liked him. He leant over the counter, discussed things with them, their headaches, their knitting, patterns for suits or dresses that they might make, and along with that he kept an open tin of biscuits so that they could have them if they felt peckish. The particular favorite was a tiny round biscuit, like a holy communion wafer with a thin skin of rice paper as a lining. These were such favorites that Barry would have to put his hand down beneath the ruffs of ink paper and ferret up a few from the bottom. The rice paper did not taste like paper at all but a disc of some magical metamorphosed sugar. Besides the favorite biscuit, there were others, a sandwich of ginger filled with a soft white filling that was as sturdy as putty, and another in which there was a blend of raspberry and custard, a combination that engendered such ecstasy that one was torn between the pleasure of devouring it or tasting each grain slowly so as to isolate the raspberry from the custard flavor. There were also arrowroot and digestives but these were the last to be eaten. He called the biscuits bikkies and cigarettes ciggies. He was not such a favorite with the men, both because he raved to the women and because he voiced the notion of bringing drama to the town. He said that he would find a drama that would embody the talents of the people and that he would direct and produce it himself. Constantly he was casting people and although none of us knew precisely what he meant, we would agree when he said, "Rosalind, a born Rosalind," or, "Cordelia, if ever I met one." He did not, however, intend to do Shakespeare as he feared that, being untrained, the people would not be able to get their tongues around the rhyming verse and would not feel at home in bulky

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costumes. He would choose something more suitable, something that people could identify with. Every time he went to the city to buy stock, he also bought one or two plays and if there was a slack moment in the shop he would read a speech or even a whole scene, he himself acting the parts, the men's and the women's. He was very convincing when he acted the women or the young girls. One play was about a young girl who saw a dead seagull and in seeing it, her tragedy was predestined. She was crossed in love, had an illegitimate child and drove a young man to suicide. Another time he read scenes about two very unhappy people in Scandinavia who scalded each other, daily, with accusation and counter-accusation, and to buoy himself up, the man did a frenzied dance. Barry did the dance, too, jumping on and off the weighing scales or even onto the counter when he got carried away. He used to ask me to stay on after the shop closed simply because I was as besotted as he was by these exotic and tormented characters. It was biscuits, sweets, lemonade, anything. Yet something in me flinched, foresaw trouble. The locals were suspicious, they did not want plays about dead birds and illegitimate children, or unhappy couples tearing at each other, because they had these scenarios aplenty. Barry decided, wisely, to do a play that would be more heartening, a simple play about wholesome people and wholesome themes, such as getting the harvest in safely. I was always privy to each new decision, partly because of my mania for the plays and partly because I had to tell him how his pony was doing. The pony grazed with us and consequently we were given quite a lot of credit. I shall never forget my mother announcing this good news to me, flushed with pride, almost suave as she said, "If ever you have the hungry grass on the way from school, just go into Barry and say you feel like a titbit." In telling me this so casually, I saw how dearly she would have loved to have been rich, to entertain, to give lunch parties and supper parties, to show off the linen tablecloths and the good cutlery which she had vaselined over the years to keep the steel from rusting. In these imaginary galas she brandished the two silver salvers, the biscuit barrel and the dinner plates with their

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bouquets of violets in the center and scalloped edging that looked like crochet work. We had been richer but over the years the money got squandered. Barry liked us and was even a favorite with my mother, to whom he did not talk about dramas, but about the ornaments in our house, commenting on her good taste. It was the happiest half year in my life, being able to linger in Barry's shop and while he was busy read some of these plays and act them silently inside my head. With the customers all gone, I would sit on the counter, swing my legs, gorge biscuits and discuss both the stories and the characters. Barry in his white shop coat and with a sharpened pencil in his hand would make notes of the things we said. He would discuss the scenery, the lights, the intonation of each line, and when an actor should hesitate or then again when an actor should let rip. Barry said it was a question of contrast; of nuance versus verve. I stayed until dark, until the moon came up or the first star. He walked home but he did not try to kiss one or put his hand on the tickly part at the back of the knee, the way other men did, even the teacher's first cousin who pretended he wasn't doing it, when he was. Barry was as pure as a young priest and like a priest had pale skin with down on it. His only blemish was his thinning hair and the top of his head was like an egg, with big wisps, which I did not like to look at.

Business for him was not quite as flush as in those first excitable weeks, but, as he would say to my mother, things were "ticking over," and also he was lucky in that his Aunt Milly in the Midlands was going to leave him her farm and her house. Meanwhile if there were debts she would come to the rescue, so that he would never be, like us, disgraced by having his name printed in a gazette, where all the debtors' names were printed so that the whole country knew of it. As it neared autumn Barry had decided on a play and had started auditions.

"All for Hecuba and Hecuba for me," he said to the mystified customers. It was a play about travelling players, so that, as he said, the actors and actresses could have lots of verve and camp it up. No one knew quite what he meant by "camp it up." He mulled over playing the lead himself but there were

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objections from people in the town. So each evening, men and women went to the parlor that adjoined the shop, read for him and often emerged disgruntled and threatening to start up a rival company because he did not give them the best part. Then an extraordinary thing happened. Barry had written on the spur of the moment to a famous actor in Dublin for a spot of advice. In the letter he had also said that if the actor was ever passing through the vicinity he might like "to break bread." Barry was very proud of the wording of this letter. The actor replied on a postcard. It was a postcard in which four big white cats adhered together, in a mesh. Spurred by this signal Barry made a parcel of country stuffs and sent them to the actor by registered post. He sent butter, fowl, homemade cake and eggs wrapped in thick twists of newspaper and packed in a little papier-mâché box. Not long after, I met him in the street in a dither. The most extraordinary thing had happened. The actor and his friend were coming to visit, had announced it without being invited, said they had decided to help Barry in his artistic endeavor and would teach him all the rudiments of theater that were needed for his forthcoming production. "A business lunch à trois," was how Barry described it, his voice three octaves higher, his face unable to disguise his fervid excitement. My mother offered to loan linen and cutlery, the Liddy girl was summoned to scrub, and Oona, the sacristan, was cajoled to part with some of the flowers meant for the altar while I was enlisted to go around the hedges and pick anything, leaves, branches, anything.

"His friend is called Ivan," Barry said and added that though Ivan was not an actor, he was a partner and saw to the practical aspect of things. How he knew this I have no idea, because I doubt that the actor would have mentioned such a prosaic thing. Preparations were begun. My mother made shortbread and cakes, orange and Madeira; she also gave two cockerels, plucked and ready for the oven with a big bowl of stuffing which the Liddy girl could put in the birds at the last minute. She even put in a darning needle and green thread so that the rear ends of the chicken could be sewn up once the stuffing was added. The bath was scoured, the bathroom floor

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so waxed that the Liddy girl slipped on it and threatened to sue but was pacified with the gift of a small packet of cigarettes. A fire was lit in the parlor for days ahead, so as to air it and give it a sense of being lived in. It was not certain if the actor and Ivan would spend the night, not clear from the rather cheeky bulletin that was sent, but, as Barry pointed out, he had three bedrooms, so that if they did decide to stay there would be no snag. Naturally he would surrender his own bedroom to the actor and give Ivan the next best one and he could be in the box room.

Nobody else was invited but that was to be expected, since after all it was a working occasion and Barry was going to pick their brains about the interpretation of the play, about the sets and about the degree to which the characters should exaggerate their plights. The guests were seen emerging from a big old-fashioned car with coupe bonnet, the actor holding an umbrella and sporting a red carnation in his buttonhole. Ivan wore a raincoat and was a little portly but they ran so quickly to the hall door that only a glimpse of them was seen. Barry had been standing inside the door since after Mass, so that the moment he heard the thud of the knocker, the door was swung open and he welcomed them into the cold but highly polished corridor. We know that they partook of lunch because the Liddy girl told how she roasted the birds to a tee, added the potatoes for roasting at the correct time, and placed the lot on a warmed platter with carving knife and carving fork to one side. She had knocked on the parlor door to ask if he wanted the lunch brought in, but Barry had simply told her to leave it in the hatch and that he would get it himself as they were in the thick of an intense discussion. She grieved at not being able to serve the lunch because it meant both that she could not have a good look at the visitors and that she would not get a handsome tip.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon when the disturbance happened. I had gone over there because of being possessed by a mad hope that they could do a reading of the play, and that I would be needed to play some role, even if it was a menial one. I stood in the doorway of the drapery shop across

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the street, visible, if Barry should lift the net curtain and look out. Indeed I believed he would and I waited quite happily. The village was quiet and sunk in its after-dinner somnolence, with only myself and a few dogs prowling about. It had begun to spatter with rain. I heard a window being raised and was stunned to see the visitors on the small upstairs balcony, dressed in outlandish women's clothing. I should have seen disaster then, except that I thought they were women, that other visitors, their wives perhaps, had come unbeknownst to us. When I saw Barry in a maroon dress, larking, I ducked down, guessing the awful truth. He was calling, "Friends, Romans, Countrymen." Already three or four people had come to their doorways and soon there was a small crowd looking up at the appalling spectacle of three drunk men, pretending to be women. They were all wearing pancake makeup and were heavily rouged. The actor also wore a string of pearls and kept hitting the other two in jest. Ivan was wearing a pleated skirt and a low-cut white blouse, with falsies underneath. The actor had on some kind of toga and was shouting wild endearments and throwing kisses.

The inflamed owner of the drapery shop asked me how long these antics had been going on.

"I don't know," I said, my face scarlet, every bit of me wishing to vanish. Yet I followed the crowd as they moved, inexorably, towards the balcony, all of them speechless as if the spectacle had robbed them of their reason. It was in itself like a flag, this silent throng moving toward a particular destiny.

Barry wore a tam-o'-shanter and looked uncannily like a girl. It gave me the shivers to see this metamorphosis. He even tossed his neck like a girl and you would no longer believe he was bald. The actor warmed to the situation and starting calling people "ducky" and "cinders" while also reciting snatches from Shakespeare. He singled people out. So carried away was he, by the allure of his performance, that the wig he was wearing began to slip, but, determined to be a sport about this, he took it off, doffed it to the crowd and replaced it again. It was a brunette wig. One of the women, a Mrs. Gleeson, fainted, but more attention was being paid to the three per-

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formers than to her so she had to stagger to her feet again. Seeing that the actor was stealing the scene, Ivan did something terrible: he opened the low-cut blouse, took out the falsies, tossed them down to the crowd and said to one of the young men, "Where there's that, there's plenty more." The young man in question did not know what to do, did not know whether to pick them up and throw them back, or challenge the strangers to a fight. The actor and Ivan then began arguing and vied with each other as to who was the most fetching. Barry had receded and was in the doorway of the upper room, still drunk but obviously not so drunk as to be indifferent to the calamity that had occurred. The actor, it seemed, had also taken a liking to the young man whom Ivan had thrown the falsies to, and now holding a folded scroll, he leant over the wrought iron, looked down directly at the man, brandished the scroll and said, "It's bigger than that, darling." At once the locals got the gist of the situation and called on him to come down so that they could beat him to a pulp. Enthused now by their heckling, he stood on the wobbly parapet and began to scold them, telling them there were some naughty skeletons in their lives and that they couldn't fool him by all pretending to be happily married men. Then he said something awful: he said that the great Oscar Wilde had termed marriage "the sheets of lawful lust." A young guard arrived and called up to the actor to please recognize that he was causing a disturbance to the peace as well as scandalizing innocent people.

"Come and get me darling," the actor said and wriggled his forefinger again and again, like a saucy heroine in a play. Also, on account of being drunk he was swaying on this very rickety parapet.

"Come down now," the guard said, trying to humor him a bit because he did not want the villagers to have a death on their hands. The actor smiled at this note of conciliation and called the guard "Lola," and asked if he ever used his big baton anywhere else, and so provoked the young guard and so horrified the townspeople that already men were taking off their jackets to prepare for a fight.

"Beat me, I love it," he called down while they lavished dire

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threats on him. Ivan, it seemed, was now enjoying the scene and did not seem to mind that the actor was getting most of the attention and most of the abuse. Two ladders were fetched and the young guard climbed up to arrest the three men. The actor teased him as he approached. The doctor followed, vowing that he would give them an injection to silence their filthy tongues. Barry had already gone in, and Ivan was trying to mollify them, saying it was all clean fun, when the actor put his arms around the young guard and lathered him with frenzied kisses. Other men hurried up the ladder and pushed the culprits into the bedroom so that people would be spared any further display of lunacy. The french doors were closed, and shouting and arguments began. Then the voices ceased as the offenders were pulled from the bedroom to the room downstairs, so that they could be carted into the police van which was now waiting. People feared that maybe these theatrical villains were armed, while the women wondered aloud if Barry had had these costumes and falsies and things, or if the actors had brought them. It was true that they had come with two suitcases. The Liddy girl had been sent out in the rain to carry them in. The sergeant who now arrived on the scene called to the upper floor but upon getting no answer went around to the back of the house where he was followed by a straggle of people. The rest of us waited in front, some of the opinion that the actor was sure to come back onto the balcony, to take a bow. The smaller children went from the front to the back of the house and returned to say there had been a terrible crash of bottles and crockery. The dining room table was overturned in the fracas. About ten minutes later they came out by the back door, each of the culprits held by two men. The actor was wearing his green suit but his makeup had not been fully wiped off so that he looked vivid and startled like someone about to embark on a great role. Ivan was in his raincoat and threatening aloud to sue unless he was allowed to speak to his solicitor. He called the guards and the people "rabble." The woman who had fainted went up to Barry and vehemently cursed him while one of the town girls had the audacity to ask the actor for his autograph. He shouted the name of the thea-

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ter in Dublin to which she could send for it. Some said that he would never again perform in that or any theater, as his name was mud.

As I saw Barry waiting to be bundled into the van like a criminal, I wanted to run over to him, or else to shout at the locals, disown them in some way. But I was too afraid. He caught my eye for an instant. I don't know why it was me he looked at, except perhaps he was hoping he had a friend, he was hoping our forays into drama had made a bond between us. He looked so abject that I had to look away and instead concentrated my gaze on the shop window, where the weighing scales, the ham slicer and all the precious commodities were like props on an empty stage. From the side of my eye I saw him get into the big black van and saw it drive away with all the solemnity of a hearse.

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James Poolos

For The Bloodline Of A Shadow

In Ohio, the untried earth lifts
To coax pale horses from the edge of a wet, blue field.
White apple blossoms are unhurried
In this arousal. There is no sound when mist thins.

At night, packs of stray dogs chase deer beneath the ridge.
I crawl the face of the hill out back, then under wire
To approach gravestones from behind, to gaze into tunnels
Stars once tipped. It is so quiet, I can hear the brush they tear
apart.

The deer breathes easily, but its circles wane.
By morning I'll find the carcass bleeding into a stream,
Raise buzzards from small pools in shale hollows,
From awful mud. Nothing is ever complete.

Now, it is the night the deer breathes into, night
I walk between. Some light, in the stillness of these hills,
I am dying for.
It is so bright, I think I see my father.

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Two Poems by John Witte

Snail

A tongue crossing the place where we burn
our trash, the snail slides over
ashes, nails and glass, moving
by rhythmical contractions of its muscular foot,
dragging its lungs and stomach in a rusted
clockwise-spiraling shell. It stops,
seeming to listen,
waving its blind horns,
then goes on, remembering
by touch the way to the compost, glazing the path
with a glistening slime like semen,
the ground beneath it sealed
in a kind of sleep.

A boy, I discovered the snail
sac in my groin, horn erect,
an eye at the tip leading me I could not
imagine where, the clasp and spasm, her labial
flower rippling at the perimeter.

The secret fetus curls inside. It is not
understood why the snail
embryo twists back
on itself, triggering the vortex. Our children
asleep in the next room, we listen
for their cries at night.

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In Nuremberg, a snail advancing deliberately as time
gripped our wrist, its coiled spring gradually
unwinding, the first watch
too heavy to carry,
telling us *when*.

But the snail does not hurry. It inserts
a tooth-studded tongue into its food
and patiently rasps. Intertwined
all day and night, it completes
its delicate hermaphroditic copulation. It sleeps
for years, recoiled as if dead.

We have heard the galactic noise, the pulsing
hiss of radio emissions from the center
of the Milky Way. We have seen
its shape: a spiral disk, a hundred billion
stars in a snail whorl, a slow pinwheel of lights.

Moon Shell, Paper Bubble, Baby's Ear,
it listens. The leaves
breathe. *Cochlea*
in Latin, the snail has crept into our ear,
to the end of the labyrinth, a coiled chamber rooted
to the brain. A gentle rain
has begun, freckling
the gray ashes.

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Meteorite

Something falling out of the night sky, we watch it
burn like a fragment of thought
or dream. We go on
pulling our children home in the wagon.
We bathe them, shining, and tell them a story.

I remember snow falling over the house
in Maine, our feverish conversations, the road
drifted over, the country sick
with war. *Several tons*
of celestial debris strike the earth
each day. The fall of a meteor was thought
an omen, good or bad.

We have a family now, so much
has changed. I lifted our children
up out of their mother into the light. At Delphi
a conical stone fallen from the sky
was enshrined, swaddled
in new-shorn wool. *Omphalos*,
navel of the world, it was thought to be
the stone swallowed by Cronos, causing him
to vomit his devoured children.

And to the east, at Ephesus,
in the temple of Artemis they worshipped
a dark flint, pitted and glassy from its searing
descent to the earth: Artemis, guardian of the young
of all creatures. They nearly lynched St. Paul
for vilifying their goddess.

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I knew the moment we conceived
each of our children. A streak of light,
a meteorite is somehow connected to salvation
from the destroying father: the celestial child
emerging hot out of the earth.

Looking up *meteor*, I find it
rooted to *aorta*: to lift, heave.
I remember us listening in those long silences,
watching the snow settling, an accumulation of light
on the ground, and wondering when
the bombing would end.
At night we partied, stoned,
and prowled the women's dorms.

A search party fanned out into the woods
where the meteor was thought to have landed.
Sightings of the fall were numerous,
and the targeted area
unusually small. Still,
it was many square miles, and the searchers walked
all day, some of them camping overnight,
without finding anything.
They watched for broken tree limbs,
burned patches, and places where the soft duff
was kicked up. But they found nothing,
so vast was the area they searched,
and so great the distance between them.

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Three Poems by James Cummins

The Passion

When I build the fire in the living room
and unroll my sleeping bag beside it
it dawns on me I'm not
the outdoors type.
Or perhaps I'm the one who drops,
carelessly, the lighted cigarette,
hurrying down the mountain before rain.
What follows me has found me,
here, in my own house.

Slowly, the fire takes over.
It licks the walls, rings the windows,
defers to the magic circle
I draw with my wife's lipstick.
I sit inside it, watching the floor disappear.
Maybe someone will come
with more water, or more fire.

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The Voices

Because I evinced an interest a few
of the younger doctors bought me a white
coat. It was quite a joke (there was even
some discussion of rubber instruments),
and I went along with it, often jamming
my hands into my pockets and dancing
around the room, humming "The Blue Danube."
I enjoyed them: they were so much funnier
than the older ones with their monocles.
Usually, we stood around imitating
the more severely afflicted patients,
or just cracking jokes: "Take Napoleon.
Please." I had a room with a river view—
it's surprising what an honest appraisal
of one's needs can avail—and my photos
of celebrities caught in compromising
positions (which I'd blown up to poster size)
became rather the rage. I acquired
a sort of cult following. They gave me
a nameplate and began to smuggle me
into the Staff Cafeteria—until
within a few years, the turnover rate
nearly as high as the one for suicide,
no one remained among the attendants
who remembered I'd once been a patient.
Eventually, I was given an office
and was formally welcomed to the staff.
No one was more surprised than I (which
distraction, along with the forged photostats
of my doctorate from Chicago, was taken
as the air of genius). I grew accustomed
to this respectful attitude. I became
quite a team player: I found I had a knack
for keeping everyone "loose." Thus it was
I came to know my true calling: I

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could see behind the fused mask of healing.
There were rooms leading into rooms. In each,
a child played with her toys, or dressed in his
mother's clothes, or squinted along the barrel
of a toy rifle, dreaming of getting
a father in its sights . . . Amazing: it was
all true, what they said—yet they were
left in the ruins of their discoveries,
and no good came of them. At the staff dinners,
which I more and more often prepared,
the jokes about "a mother's touch" became—
more accurately so—blurts of pain and fear,
unsurrounded by laughter. More than once,
after too much wine, I held someone's head
to my breasts, stroking the damp hair . . .
But soon after I purchased the ham radio,
we all became buffs. So many stories,
out there, to be listened to—and perhaps
downstairs, in one's own living room, someone
sits, and will not listen. We listened.
And made suggestions. Although we had only
speech patterns and a safe anonymity
to go on, the painful lesions and trauma
are evident to the intuitive mind.
There was "Eskimo"—a man who lived in
Juneau, and was a high school teacher.
(He called his Buick a dog sled, to amuse us.)
"Thick Wrists" was an ex-auto racer.
And "Buckeye" was a housewife in Ohio
who had lived for some years in Indiana
and was afraid she would become known as
a "Hoosier." (That was an interesting case.)
But there were many cases: radio signals
coming in from all over the country.
And it was through listening to them
I grew to be very happy in my work.
In the mornings, I see my patients—

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for though I but dimly remember my own
illness, I am unable to deny them.
No, more: I need them. In the afternoons,
I read and write in my rooms overlooking
the river. And in the evening we gather
in the large room at the end of the hall
to listen to the voices we take care of.
I am happy. Yet often at night when
I'm certain the others are asleep,
I close the door to my room softly,
get some milk in the kitchen—it calms me—
and sit down in front of the radio,
working its dials. I speak to the numberless
voices I don't know, and give and receive
small bits of useful information.
Someone has a recipe, or has seen
a good movie—perhaps an amusing
story about a child. I know now I'm not
looking for anyone, anymore. No one
is left, whose voice I don't understand.
For my own mother is dead, and though I
don't know where she has gone, I know where
she has been—and I hear the stories
surrounding me as they once surrounded her.
They rise up so beautifully some nights,
opening like a bright fan of pain—
and what is left of her voice is a darkness
turning in my mind like a diamond
turning in the kidney of a bum, his cry . . .
I hear it, and close my eyes, and can sleep.

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To My Daughter

Who knows what we will ask of you, need of you?
Who would know why, if I sat up next to your bed
for hours each night, robbing you of the dark,
and you too tired, of course, but registering
each little crescent of light behind each eyelid?
And perhaps it will be in that mild irritation
we will make our first connection, maybe you
will grow to resent this intrusion on your sleep,
and you will wait patiently your entire life
to find that word, whatever words will make
me miserable for a year, but you more free
to breathe and walk in the sun your short while.
You will come out of me, you know, then.
The years of hovering around you, I hope
benignly, afraid that you will learn my fear,
make my mistakes, or that you'll know what I know,
the sadness of most things a little before
their beauty—these years like my arms will open,
and you will walk out no less tentative than
the morning you will stand up for the first time,
and move in a businesslike way from couch to table.
The old snake will accept the illusion of the skin,
turn into the paper of yesterday's papers for you,
that you might break clear: you'll see me again,
in another guise, before I leave you forever,
before you founder one night in a dark room,
not unlike this one, your thoughts far from me
that drive you to your loneliness among others.
Perhaps then some one time I tried to signal you
will open before your eyes like the flower those
moments were intended to be, and you will take
some comfort again in knowing that I loved you.
Who knows what we will ask of you, need of you?

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The Psychopathology of Everyday Life by Sigmund Freud

Daniel Stern

In Volume II of Ernest Jones's biography of Sigmund Freud, Jones notes, regarding Freud's discovery of the pressure on the conscious mind to repress—what the rest of us call forgetting:

The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, *1904. Its main theme—the influence of unconscious processes in interfering with conscious functioning—was sharply criticized at first by psychologists, but has been more widely accepted and generally known than any other of Freud's teachings. The phenomena in question have since been given the name of "parapraxes." (Literally, "false practices.")*
—D.S.

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Can you imagine how it might have turned out if Katherine Eudemie had forgotten her child in the coatroom of the Russian Rendezvous in March instead of a glorious, sunny June? Think of the women's coats soggy with snow—the men's trench coats soaked with wet—the little girl, Tulip, under a curse of endless sniffles. Impossible to think of raising a child in such an environment.

Also, in June the business slows down, but somebody is always on duty in the coatroom for the occasional rainy day, the umbrellas like sentinels in the stand in front of the revolving door. There were two people on duty. Usually one of the Old Guard regulars, round, soft, sixty-five-ish or more—like Sasha who fled Russia to America via Paris with the Chauve Souris company as a young girl in the twenties. And there was always someone like Myrna.

Myrna was one of the "going-to-be's" for which the RR was well known. You know, going to be an actress, going to be a writer, going to be a dancer. They were usually young, but perhaps not all that different from the stylish types ordering blini with red caviar, or *karsky shashlik*, inside the dining room.

"Going-to-be" is a long process. Especially when it comes to writing and music, acting and dancing. In those sacred spheres exactly what and where one has arrived at is uncertain. The dining room of the RR was full of men and women circling each other in the endless dance of confirmation; moths whose success could only be confirmed by direct contact with the flame. Sometimes the main difference between the people caring for the coats and hats and those checking them were the burn marks.

It all began with Katherine Eudemie forgetting a book: *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* by Sigmund Freud. It was not the kind of book Katherine usually read. But exhausted by the impossible task of getting a second novel published she had secretly decided to become a psychotherapist.

This was after years of ferocious dedication as a patient. Her embarrassment at the status of being a permanent basket-case led her to joke with friends: "When I was a kid in Chicago I

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never played Doctor. I always knew I'd grow up to be a patient." But that wore thin after a while: she was getting to be too familiar. To survive in Russian Rendezvous New York you must never be pigeonholed. Once they put you in it's almost impossible to fly out again.

You must either constantly succeed or constantly surprise. Katherine had succeeded once, as the beautiful young provincial, a philo-Judaic writer with a "sound," as the reviews put it. But the sound increasingly became a whine. When her suicide attempts no longer attracted the appropriate attention she had a baby.

Everyone took babies seriously!

Her sound changed.

"Having Tulip put life into perspective," she told her agent at an RR lunch.

"How old is she now?"

"Four next month."

"God, where do the years go?" Where? Eight since Katherine's first novel was published, six since she'd married the editor-anthologist Jackson Eudemie, and two weeks since she'd decided to become a therapist. A failed actress friend had done it. It didn't take years to accomplish anymore, not like the medical ones. The training at some places was only a matter of months before you were actually handling patients.

"Under supervision, of course," the actress said. "This isn't L.A. Out there all you need is the money for the Yellow Pages ad: QUALIFIED PSYCHOTHERAPIST, MARITAL, SEXUAL AND PERSONALITY PROBLEMS SOLVED SWIFTLY . . . VISA, MASTERCARD AND AMERICAN EXPRESS."

She could joke because she didn't quite take Katherine's desperation seriously. No one did. Perhaps that's why Katherine had to escalate. What do you do after you've had crying jags on a PEN panel at Carnegie Hall; when you've called the same friends at four A.M. threatening self-destruction one too many times?

What you do is you forget that you have left your baby in

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the affectionate care of the hat-check people during lunch at the Russian Rendezvous, go on your way to a gallery opening, then run back to the restaurant sweating terror.

The first parapraxis was checking the book in its Scribner's shopping bag and forgetting to pick it up. Freud's book was to be her new primer. Myrna naturally knew nothing of all this when she handed it back to Katherine the next time she was in the restaurant. The writer stared at the book, distracted. But it was nothing to attract Myrna's attention.

People forget everything in checkrooms, often the things most precious to them. Pianists forget sheet music, dancers forget leg warmers and love letters, singers forget the portfolios of reviews with which they were to dazzle impresarios.

People also forget gloves, coats, hats, packages of condoms, eyeglasses, wallets both empty and stuffed with money, appointment books with irreplaceable addresses and unlisted phone numbers, the lack of which can harm a career.

It was doubtful, however, if anyone had ever checked a child before. Later, when it all became an open secret, the Russian Rendezvous Regulars debated the point. The actress and teacher Stella Adler, grand and witty as usual, said the world would be a better place if more mothers had forgotten more children in coatrooms. Her husband, Harold Clurman, claimed to know an actress who left her baby at Sardi's, in the days when people still went to Sardi's, but it was not a forgetting, it was an abandonment. The young woman had been driven insane by bad reviews of her first starring role and blamed the distractions of motherhood for the disaster.

Some of the regulars from the G.O.P., the Grand Old Period, believed that Myrna had as much to do with the developing events as the distracted mother and the adaptable child. That school of thought held that Myrna, disappointed in the way her life was going, jumped at the chance to raise Tulip in loco parentis. It was a chance to combine all her frustrated yearnings into one: she'd been a schoolteacher in Fargo, North Dakota, had come east to attack the stage and had become engaged to Sheffield, a director who had never directed

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a play but who made much of the fact that his sperm count was too low for fathering. (Just in case Myrna might press that issue.)

Mysteriously, Myrna became pregnant and had to take a job at the Russian Rendezvous to pay for the abortion he insisted she have. (During the Grand Old Period abortions were still illegal, dangerous and expensive.) After she'd thrown him out he often came back to borrow money and to lecture her. Myrna was a soft touch.

"You're crazy, arranging the study, play, and education of a four-year old in a *restaurant*, with or without the mother's cooperation. You'll destroy the child and get yourself in hot water. You're trying to be a teacher, actress and Earth Mother all in one." (He'd never gotten to direct a play so he had to use psychology somewhere.)

But by that time the comedy had begun.

None of this could have happened without the ironic but careful complicity of K.K. Krasner, actor and cashier at the Russian Rendezvous.

Krasner had a simple, fastidious contempt for the ballet of winning and losing that was performed, daily, in that dining room. His ambitition was Shakespearean in its size and intensity; he could afford an Olympian gaze at people who tried to beat their friends out for a television commercial assignment with the passion of Richard the Third. You can see the reruns of Krasner playing Coriolanus and other such sentimental softies on Public Television at least once every season. But as a famous actor he's no loftier, no more aristocratic, than he was when elegantly sliding the checks under the register and punching the keys. (Charge cards were less ubiquitous in those days—and Lew allowed personal charge accounts for the old customers, long after it was clear they would never be settled or even substantially reduced.)

Krasner was so cool you could never have guessed that he was worried. But he was. He was one of the few who knew what trouble the restaurant was getting into.

Lew and his co-owner Paul Buchalter were doing the classic

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Partner Act: fights, threats, reconciliations and more fights. Buchalter was a vanilla businessman—married, conservative. Lew was unhappy, lonely, drinking too much and refusing to think of his restaurant as a business.

"This is not a Temple of the Arts and it's not a halfway-house for refugees," Buchalter began, right in front of the cashier's cage. It happened to be the first day of Katherine forgetting Tulip, but that was not yet an issue. Krasner watched from behind his silver-rimmed glasses and behind his cage, like a detached deity.

"Don't tell me what my place is," Lew said. "You bought in, you can buy out. That isn't your life, it's your investment."

All this, you understand, during the last few minutes of the rush hour. (Though the RR was not yet the great success it is today. This scene couldn't happen quite that way, now; there would be a line of people waiting to get a table.)

"You don't have the right spirit to run a good restaurant."

"You mean I don't have the soul of a headwaiter." At which Misha, one of the twin headwaiters—the shy one—left for urgent mythical business in the kitchen, an action he performed whenever any difficulty arose in the front.

Ah, Lew Krale, Restauranteur Laureate of our youth in New York; under your bleary eyes passed hundreds of the hopeful—deadbeat actors and writers supported by your willful myopia regarding monthly bills. ("There are no deadbeats, only Slowbeats," Lew said. "It might be ten years, but sooner or later everybody pays.") Restaurant Management For Poets, Paul called it.

Tulip, who had been following the argument with interest, spoke up.

"Which one," she asked Myrna, "is the headwaiter?"

"Oh, my God," Lew said. "What is that child doing here. This place used to have a liquor license."

He reached over the counter into the coatroom and hauled Tulip up in his arms, surprising everyone. "Whose mother are you?" he said to Tulip.

"Katherine Eudemie," she said.

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"See that," Lew said. "The kid took my joke, treated me like I was dyslexic, reversed my reversal back, and told me who her mother is."

One of the best-kept secrets in New York is that Lew Krale was a schoolteacher before he bought out the original owners of the RR. He'd actually published a paper on dyslexia.

It was that teacher of learning-disabled students—now they call it Special Ed—whose restaurant became the late-night hangout for two decades of playwrights (hit and flop)—produced, unproduced, and never to be produced. Also, the famous of all disciplines—Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, Arthur Miller, Harold Clurman, Eli Wallach, Anne Jackson, Dustin Hoffman, Lenny Bernstein; the semi-famous—Merce Cunningham, Kermit Bloomgarden; the obscure (how compile a list of the authentically obscure?)—Meade Roberts, the minor playwright, Larry Rosenthal, the minor composer, Sherwood Arthur, the minor director. (It is not enough to be not well known to merit the term obscure—one must have the possibility, the gifts that could have brought fame but by luck, character or the nature of individual talent never did.)

The names don't sing the song; not even the ones you might recognize. (Those change from decade to decade, anyway. Who remembers Louis Spohr? In certain years of the nineteenth century he was as famous as Beethoven.) No! Much more important is the melody of the discourse at 12:45 A.M., fifteen minutes before closing time. Not a salon, exactly—not the Dome or La Coupole in 1945 with Sartre or Camus, but if less than that, more than Sardi's, more than sexual gossip and the ups and downs of careers. Laughter, literary and theatrical criticism, bad taste, cripple jokes, philosophical questioning, career-pushing, psychoanalytical reflections, and the persistent borrowing of cash. "Ah," Stella Adler said, breathless one night, "we'll laugh our lives away." All of it washed with the light colors of youth and hope.

And all presided over, in a half-daze of alcohol, by Lew, the former teacher of the learning-disabled. And who could be more weirdly disabled than these wonderfully gifted looney-

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birds—winners and losers alike—staying up night after night making the least of their gifts . . . talking non-stop . . . laughing . . .

Jackson Eudemie had been one of them, happily peripheral. Neither obscure nor famous, he was just a young man mad about writing. He'd brought his young wife, Katherine, a refugee from the Wasp Middle West, into the RR circle. Somehow it closed with her inside and Jackson out. That's how it is with circles, the geometry of luck.

Lew made his restaurant a home away from home for these walking wounded. And he knew Katherine Eudemie to be the prime sort of gifted nut who helped give the restaurant its special texture. But children—this was another matter.

"Poor kid," he murmured over Tulip's blonde head. He handed her back to Myrna.

"Myrna," he said. "We don't check kids. Only hats and coats."

Buchalter didn't need much to push him over the line. He was a very short man, nervous to a fault. "Okay," he said, "That does it for me. Count me out."

Lew laughed. "One," he said. "Two . . . three . . ." By this time his partner was gone through the revolving door.

Tulip was no dope. She showed how well she could count. "Four," she said, "five . . . six . . ."

Krasner didn't like Lew's laugh. He needed his cashier's job to pay bills while he searched out his dramatic destiny. "Are you sure you know what you're doing?" he asked. He pointed in the direction Buchalter had gone, the great outside world. "He won't just let it go. He'll counterattack! You don't want to lose your restaurant, do you?"

His bony face had turned pink at the emotional strain of making such a speech. Everyone knew that the cashier/actor could not make a speech longer than a half-dozen words, usually short, caustic words—except when acting. What he required was a Shakespearean quotation, behind which he could hide true sentiments otherwise unavailable to his own natural tongue. He was known to be absolutely unwilling to read cold

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auditions. He left his nine-by-twelve glossies and resumes at production offices but never stayed to confront a living producer or casting director—anyone who might engage him in speeches of terrifyingly unpredictable length and potential sincerity. Whether this was the loftiness of a Coriolanus or Woody Allen shyness, none of us knew. It was certainly one of the main reasons behind Krasner's lagging acting career.

"Misha," Lew called out, embarrassed at such passion from the cashier's cage, "Get a plate of sour cream for the kid and a scotch for me."

"I'll get sour cream for the girl but you've had enough to drink."

"Ah, then you're not Misha. You're Morris."

One of Lew's afflictions was having inherited twin headwaiters—identical twins, Misha and Morris. Bright, young refugees, no one knew exactly from where, Morris was a kind of self-appointed policeman of Lew's soul and was taking some course of study, as was his brother. No one knew what course; only that they spelled each other on nights—or days—when the other one was at school. Misha had no interest in Lew's drinking habits or his soul. That was Morris's territory. And Lew's torture was that he never knew which one he was yelling at.

"That happens to be true," Morris said. "But it doesn't change the facts. You've had enough."

"A scotch, I said, Morris the miser, it's my scotch and my life," Lew thundered. Morris brought the smallest scotch he could pour, which Lew sipped while watching a hysterical Katherine return to clutch her daughter to her breast, her cheek, her lips.

"Tulip . . . Tulip . . ." she murmured, weeping in a combination of relief and embarrassment, "My God, My God, I'm so glad you're here."

"What does it all mean?" Lew muttered.

The next time the child was forgotten she was left for most of the afternoon. By the time Katherine Eudemie came back and got her, Tulip was helping Myrna with the early evening

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cocktail arrivals; no coats, the weather was warm, but there was a man's hat, and there was a woman's attaché case. Sasha had begun to tell Tulip about the Chauve Souris, about what it was like to flee the Russian Revolution, to join a song and dance troupe in Paris and end up in America in 1924. "You know what was the Chauve Souris?" Sasha asked. Tulip did not know. "My, my, my," Sasha said. Every little girl in White Russian circles in Paris had known of the Chauve Souris. When Katherine Eudemie arrived the little girl was reluctant to leave. She asked her mother if she had ever heard of the Chauve Souris.

Katherine gave both women a sharp look but this time was not hysterical. For a brief moment it was not certain how the incident was to be treated.

"Please," Katherine said to Sasha, "Don't fill her head with fairy tales;" a Russian noblewoman speaking to one of the women-in-waiting at her country estate. Then she and Tulip were gone and the evening business occupied everyone's attention.

It was Lew's lightness with Katherine's unpaid bills which fueled the first stages of the madness. She would never have thought to make a special trip to drop the child off at the coatroom for the afternoon. But, lunching there almost every day as she did on her unpaid charge account, it grew easier and easier to just move on to her appointments and come back later and later. Precisely the kind of lunching Buchalter decided had to stop if they were to get the restaurant safely in the black.

This was New York of long ago, a city waking up from the dream of war—but the boom was losing some of its thunder. By the time of Katherine Eudemie's first parapraxis, words like Recession were in the air. Everyone knew somebody who knew somebody who had folded a business: a publishing house, a small record company, something! One heard distant rumors about established restaurants growing shaky, God forbid!

"Why does she do it?" Sasha asked Myrna.

"It doesn't matter. I wish she'd do it again."

"Don't wish such a thing."

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"I can take care of her better."

"This is not right," Sasha said, and turned to her Russian-language newspaper.

"Everything isn't right." Myrna said. "For me to be alone in the world isn't right either. But I am. For Lew to be without a wife and to maybe lose his restaurant isn't right, either, but it might happen."

"Bite your tongue," Sasha said.

Myrna smiled and waited for the next parapraxis.

How many times had Krasner heard Lew Krale muttering his favorite litany: *what does it all mean?* Once he pointed out to Lew that he had never once heard any of the questing artists who were drinking their drinks or stuffing their faces at the RR cry out, "what does it all mean?" Only Lew, the owner, the businessman.

"Does that make you an artist manquè, Lew?" he asked.

"If I'm anything I'm a businessman manquè." Lew laughed and said, "Get out of here and stop trying to make a manquè out of me."

Lew was devoted to failure. At first he did not know this; but later he got the idea quite clearly, and it became a kind of cause célèbre for him. In spite of the superstars surrounding him, Lew would have liked to be the Saint of Failure. But that was to be denied him, like so many other things he wanted.

LEW: What I love about these maniacal writers, these dancers especially, these musicians, is that they fail! It's practically guaranteed. But they don't stop! They're crazy. They just don't give up. Krasner—(he was talking to the cashier at the end of the day)—some of them know they're doing their absolute best and they still fail! WHAT FUCKING HEROES!

KRASNER: So?

LEW: If they lose and keep on going, why shouldn't I? Okay, a restaurant is not a play or a painting or a book. But it's a THING! IT'S A WAY OF BEING IN THE WORLD! And I want to go on like them, win or lose.

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KRASNER: No dice, Lew. It doesn't work. Meat spoils. Sour cream goes bad. Lunches are down from last year and the cost of veal is up. It's not the same.

LEW: (mutters) What does it all mean? Where are we all going?

It's not clear what Katherine Eudemie's continuing parapraxes had to do with it, but come the first of July, when Myrna and Sasha would normally have been shifted from the coat-check room and put to work elsewhere in the restaurant, they were told to stay put. You don't need coat-check service, you need air conditioning. But Tulip's mother was maybe on the fourth or fifth parapraxis by then. No one in the restaurant was surprised at Lew's decision to keep Myrna and Sasha on duty in the front. It was a statement about the child's continuing presence and the new comedy of mistakes and affections.

Myrna was not insensitive to the subtle gift from Lew. It came with responsibilities.

"What's this prayer book doing here?"

"To teach the child about God."

"Sasha, she's only four years old."

"For four years old is no God?"

"No," Myrna said firmly. "God starts at seven. Tops. Maybe eight. And He will be brought in by her parents, if and when."

"Seven!" Sasha looked doubtful.

"It's not a question of does He exist or not. You were an actress, Sasha. Just make believe he's waiting in the wings."

"How long He waits?"

"Our father," Tulip chimed in. Myrna grabbed her in a hug.

"Okay, wise guy, if you're so smart who's Our Father?"

Tulip thought. "My father is Jackson Eudemie," she said. "So I guess Our Father is somebody else. But why is He waiting with wings?"

"You see," Myrna said helplessly.

Sasha folded her Russian newspaper and added it to a floppy pile of papers on the shelf where, as the year progressed, hats would ultimately be kept. She took the prayer book and placed it on top of the day's paper. Then she went back to the kitchen to get three glasses of tea. She paraded in quiet, round

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triumph. Leaving Myrna with a new sense of the problems which might be coming at her from every unexpected direction. Her heart was beating hard as if she'd had a narrow escape.

Taking Tulip to the bathroom. This proves to be not as traumatic as everyone had feared. Misha, who was on, stood guard while Myrna taught Tulip the basic ropes of restaurant ablutions. The child needed some help, but only the bare mechanics. Of course these were ordinary healthy times. Diarrhea waited, like God, in the wings.

Then there were Krasner's unspoken but intense concerns about the police. Captain Kolevitch dropped in often, a slender, nervous man with an enormous Saroyan-mustache, abandoned playwriting ambitions behind him and a wife in and out of institutions. Lew knew him well. You couldn't run a restaurant without knowing the police.

"It's like running a whorehouse," Lew said. "It goes with the territory."

"Watch your mouth," Myrna said.

Lew looked at her with fresh interest.

"The kid is not here," he said. "Her mother took her back two hours ago. You're really getting into this, aren't you!"

"Listen," Myrna said. "She'll be back. I don't want you to get into bad habits. We're running a different kind of show now."

"Aha," Lew said.

"The problem is not Lew's mouth," Krasner said. "It's Captain Kolevitch."

"I can't take a man seriously whose name sounds like a dish on my menu," Lew said.

"Mistake," Krasner said. "What's in a name?"

"We are not discussing roses, we're talking Tulip."

"Just everybody keep their mouth shut that we have a kid in the coatroom, okay?"

This sentence, at least nine words longer than Krasner's usual, made everybody take the Tulip/security question seri-

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ously. Captain Kolevitch was greeted with an odd ceremoniousness on his next visit. It made him suspicious and he resolved to check out what was happening at the Russian Rendezvous more closely.

Lew Krale felt more at home in his restaurant than in his home. With a customer he liked—a rare bird, but occasionally to be found—after the coffee, dessert and check he would stand up and see him to the door as if he were in his own home. On the other hand, on the odd chance that you were invited to his apartment down on West Tenth Street in the Village, he might fall asleep if the drinking and the laughing had been heavy, and leave you to find your way out unescorted. Home is where the heart beats and the RR raced Lew's pulse.

A Tulip-Moment: Agnes de Mille heading for the exit, enraged at having been seated in the back near the men's room, looking for sympathy, looking for Lew or Misha, comes upon Tulip at exactly the same moment George Balanchine enters the RR.

"Hello, young woman," Balanchine said, bending over the ledge of the coatroom to observe Tulip more closely (it came out vooman). "Do you dance?"

Agnes de Mille, still flushed and angry, snapped at him, "George, she's too young for the bar."

"*Merde*," Balanchine said, staring past her at old dance-world resentments, Bolshoi versus Broadway to get it down to simplicities. "I started Natasha Makharova at three."

"And where is she now?"

"She stopped dancing."

"Aha!"

"Aha, nothing. She got married."

"Why not," Agnes de Mille said. "You do it all the time."

"I do it to dancers."

"Exactly so," Agnes de Mille said and turning to Myrna she said. "Your little girl must start dancing now. Four years old is already late."

Tulip, in high spirits at all this attention, turned and turned

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in a graceful pastiche of ballet. The Eudemies had a television set; Tulip had observed.

"No," Agnes de Mille said, "Not now, just soon. I'll teach you first position next time I come."

Balanchine was gone. His swift disappearance was disapproval. Agnes de Mille went on to seek Misha, in Lew's absence, to complain of once again being seated near the men's room, but today, Misha turned out to be Morris. Baffled, she swept out. Perhaps only a dancer can sweep out through a revolving door.

Myrna, proud of Tulip in advance, experienced a tremble, a little *frisson* of what mothers must feel. ("Your little girl must start dancing now . . . ") It made her breath rush in a thrill through her breast.

Not long after her excitement at being mistaken for Tulip's mother she was called upon to explain the grown-up world, a little, to the kid. Which is, of course, one of the main things mothers do, either by example or using words.

It was harder than Myrna had imagined. A tart little dose of reality.

One early evening a woman was turned away from the bar because she was unescorted. The woman did not look especially disreputable. Somebody from a very small midwestern town might have felt the lipstick did not outline the lips closely enough, that the hair was too frizzy and the perfume too heavy. But basically she was middle-class: a secretary, a saleswoman, a housewife out for an evening; ambiguous. Still, off the premises she must go and without any real explanation. But not without a fuss.

When it was over Tulip wanted an explanation.

Myrna fumbled, stammered and said, "Sometimes bad women come to sit alone and talk to men they don't know, instead of coming here with men they know or they're married to . . . And then a restaurant gets to be a bad hangout and the regular customers stop coming. . ."

Tulip's steady gaze, her waiting for Myrna to make some sense out of nonsense, froze Myrna's tongue. Suddenly she

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realized how dumb all this was and how easy it is to lie to children.

"Listen," she said. "It's because men aren't fair to women."

"I'm a woman," Tulip said.

"Well—yes," Myrna said.

"Will I be able to sit at a bar without a man when I grow up?"

"Unless they keep having one law for the Lion and one for the Lamb."

"Am I a lion?"

"Certainly not!"

"Am I a lamb?"

"Just hang up this coat and shut your lamb chop."

Myrna was embarrassed. In that internal theater in which we all perform our play with ourselves as audience, she'd caught herself dumbly accepting something she'd always known was bullshit. You could usually tell a professional and it was no trick to keep the place from becoming a hooker hangout.

It was just men fucking women over as usual.

Playing "mother" was instructive.

"Don't be afraid, kid. I'm drunk but I'm a different kind of drunk."

"Lew . . ." Myrna said.

"I'm Jewish. A special breed. Alcoholicus Judaicus. Gentle, self-punishing only, guilty but not angry. And, most important of all, sooner or later I get hungry."

Tulip was curious. "All people get hungry."

"Not drunks. But I always stop drinking and start eating."

"Are you hungry now?"

"It's not going to be that easy, tonight," Lew said. "Not tonight."

Myrna observed and drew conclusions. From being apprehensive and even angry about Tulip's presence in the restaurant Lew had grown to like having her around. An odd painting was being sketched in Myrna's soul, an ersatz Renaissance

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picture, The Negative Holy Family: a man who wasn't her husband, a child who wasn't her child and Myrna/Madonna.

The summer sun was warming up the New York streets. Fantasies of strolls in the park chased around in Myrna's thoughts. She thought of mentioning some of this to Krasner but was embarrassed at the thought of exposing herself. Suppose people thought she was using Tulip to get closer to Lew? A sense of shame expressed itself swiftly in a decision to make phone calls to agents. The summer stock season was all booked, but the fall productions would be getting underway soon. Her ex-lover, Sheffield, was as much a fantasy as all of this. She had to get on with Real Life.

Besides, the RR lunch business was off so badly, who knew if she would still have a job in the fall? The telephone was in the rear of the restaurant. But en route she fell into a conversation with Gregor, a roly-poly veteran waiter. They discussed rumors: Paul was about to make an offer to buy Lew's share, take over again, get rid of the nonpaying regulars and change everything. By the time she remembered the original purpose of her errand she saw a familiar shaggy gray head—prematurely but startlingly gray—up front. It was Sheffield her ex-lover who refused to accept his termination, and who stopped by to deliver lectures to Myrna, borrow money from her, or both. Myrna not only had no money to lend him, she realized she'd forgotten to bring change for the phone.

So, for the moment, that was that on the Real Life front.

We have to imagine Katherine Eudemie waking in the middle of the night in a sweat of terror. We have to imagine her lying for a moment next to Jackson Eudemie sleeping his usual tranquil sleep, hers so palpable, a kind of semi-suffocation of snores, dreams that force gasps and waking instead of protecting sleep, and imagine her grabbed by panic before she realizes what the panic is about.

Then she gropes for her long white robe, almost tripping on the belt and runs into Tulip's bedroom. The little girl sleeps the innocent sleep of one who can tell Misha from Morris, in-

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fallibly. It astonishes everyone, this gift of hers; no one can explain it. The mysteries of identical twinness do not exist for Tulip. Some of the more imaginative members of the RR inner circle think of this as a kind of grace. Lew thinks it is only a series of lucky guesses. But he is impressed.

Of course Katherine does not know any of this. She only knows that her life is racing out of control; that she runs her daily rat race, writing her new novel, chasing assignments at *The New York Times Book Review* so that she won't be forgotten between books, terrified that she has already been forgotten after the fuss that greeted her first book four years ago; showing up for her analytic training classes—she has not missed one, though she now doubts the auspices and wonders if it is all legitimate, perhaps only another mad dance to distract herself from her own frantic dance—never missing her exercise class, because the body might be all that is left if the mind and the talent go; scared, too, that forgetting her child at the restaurant is no longer a mistake—and something much worse. She has begun to masturbate in the bathrooms of midtown restaurants and art galleries.

We must imagine that she picks the sleeping Tulip up and holds her, crooning, wetting the shut eyes with tears, unable to imagine a time when Tulip had not been with her as pride and comfort.

The next afternoon she forgets her at the RR for the longest stretch ever: five hours.

Studying the text she'd once forgotten at the restaurant, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* by Sigmund Freud, reading about the forgetting of proper names—and how complicated the causes of such simple lapses could be—Katherine Eudemie marvels and despairs at the language of gestures and at what the language of the repeated forgetting of a child might mean. Reading the book and thinking about her own lapses she feels a shiver of terror.

Katherine Eudemie's therapist was a woman who smoked cigarette after cigarette, a bad sign, Katherine thought. "Listen," she said, "I'm not sure this is going to work out."

"Oh?"

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"Remember the time I told you about, when I left my child at the hat-check room of the Russian Rendezvous?"

"I remember that time, yes."

"Those times!"

"Oh . . ."

"Yes."

"You left her or 'forgot' her?"

"The first time, definitely forgot. The second time, pretty surely. The last few it became a kind of collaboration. The woman in the hat-check room seems to like taking care of Tulip. But it scares me. That's why I'm not sure this is going to work out."

"What is 'this'?"

"The treatment, the training. I'm a patient, not vice-versa."

"You know, you shouldn't confuse what we're doing here with a classical, full-fledged Training Analysis. There is a certain way of life in America's Big Cities: New York, Chicago, L.A.," (the Therapist had a way of speaking in capital letters which unnerved Katherine), "in which people like you and I—writers whose careers disappoint, actresses whose parts never quite get recognized, the wives of successful painters who feel overlooked, mothers who have survived mortal combat with their daughters who are now off in college—all of us, having had lots of treatment of different kinds, decide to become therapists. It's as much a statement about the impossibility of being a Middle Class Woman in Modern America as it is a fresh career start."

Pause to light a new cigarette from the embers of the old. Katherine sits, stunned.

"I'm telling you all this to lower your expectations. You're not going to be a Healthy Individual curing patients."

"Then—what?"

"You're going to understand a little more about yourself and spend your time more fruitfully than hanging around waiting for your next novel to be rejected. You'll help some patients and not others and you'll earn money, maybe even a living. Best of all, you'll be doing actively to others what you experienced passively for so many years."

"What's that?"

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"TREATMENT!"

"Even if I'm so crazy myself?"

"You said the others at the restaurant were collaborating with you in this."

"Yes . . ."

"So who's crazy, you or them or everybody? We're talking about the text you're studying: The Psychopathology of Everyday Life. Everybody is disappointed in something from infancy on—everybody has a vested interest in forgetting, distorting or ignoring reality so that it feels better for the moment. This gets worse as the years mount up."

"Is that what's going on here?"

"That's what's going on here."

"Ah. . ."

She stubbed a cigarette out in a flash of red and said, in her Feminist Voice:

"It's a General Breakdown, but as always, Women lead the way."

"Ah . . ." Katherine said again. She felt better.

Myrna, too, felt better; central after years of feeling peripheral. She was the only one feeling better. As the summer burned toward mid-August, the desired pre-fall upturn in business did not happen. Krasner tallied lunch totals and Lew pondered a new advertising campaign, but he was too paralyzed by his troubles to take effective action. Paul's lawyers made rumbling noises in the background.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly when the story of Tulip, Katherine Eudemie and the Russian Rendezvous began to make its way into the air. There's always such a moment; it may be created by random gossip, by observation or by someone purposely spreading the story for reasons of their own. It is already making the rounds when Jackson Eudemie enters his old hangout, the Russian Rendezvous, and the central action of the story, carrying a suitcase and looking for Lew Krale.

"It's been a long time, Jackson," Lew said. "Put your suitcase in the checkroom."

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"No thanks, I'll hold onto it. How are you, Lew?"

"No way you'd know," Lew said with typical tact. "What'll you have?"

"It's a little early in the day," Jackson Eudemie said. "I'll have some tea."

"Misha," Lew said. "One tea and one scotch."

"Two teas coming up!"

"Dammit, Morris! if that's you—a tea and a scotch or I'll eat your bones for dinner."

Then, to Jackson, with ominous weight, "So, stranger . . ."

"Listen, Lew," Jackson Eudemie said, "my life's different, now."

"You mean money?"

"Right."

"Wrong. You know I never gave a damn about your bills. Think about all those nights we closed this place, together. You wrote a whole novel here on the arm."

"It's different when you're married."

"Hold it," Lew said. "Harold was married, Zero was married. . ."

"There's married and there's married," Jackson Eudemie said. "They were married. I got married."

"I know," Lew said, defeated. "But don't use the money as an excuse for vanishing from the scene."

"It's mainly that Katherine is in trouble—and there's my kid. . ."

"I know," Lew said to his glass.

"You're a bachelor, Lew, you'll understand. I never thought I'd get married. The thing was to be a great writer. But it all got reversed. I'm a married man who's a small-fry literateur."

"What the hell is that?"

"A literary man of small caliber. My father used to own guns. They scared the hell out of me. But so did my father. Well, if I was a pistol I'd be a .22; not even a .38 and certainly not a .45; just a .22."

Lew was thoughtful. "I don't think there's any such weapon as a .22 pistol. I think that's a kid's air rifle—but I wouldn't swear to it."

"Aha!" Jackson said. "You see my point. Here I am—a

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nonexistent .22 caliber anthologist, trying to be a responsible family man with a wife who was—albeit briefly—a .45 pistol, dynamite on the scene . . . then the dynamite turns wet . . . she has a baby . . . then after a time turns desperate . . . even a little strange . . . I'll tell you, Lew, there's more going on . . . "

"Oh?"

"She's not up to the mark."

"I got the idea," Lew said.

"No . . . she's not well. We don't know everything yet—but something serious may be happening."

"Shit," Lew said.

"I'm worried."

Not knowing what else to say, Lew said, "How is it with you two?"

"Off . . . way off . . . It has been for years. Long before this medical stuff started. I got married for the wrong reasons."

"That's a membership in a very large club."

"She was so pretty and so ready to eat up New York. Then she got eaten up . . . Maybe I will have a drink . . . "

"Have a Moscow Mule for old time's sake. Morris," Lew called out, then said, "Never marry a disappointed person."

"People aren't born disappointed. Things don't pan out. Then comes regret and it poisons everything."

Lew nodded and kept his peace.

"I used to have low expectations of life," Jackson said.

"A wonderful way to be."

"I didn't know what to expect of marriage. But it started to go bad long before this new stuff—leaving Tulip, trying to become a therapist."

"A what? I thought she was always on the couch herself?"

"Don't be so surprised. Patients and therapists are like the cops and the mafia. Two sides of the same coin."

"Too glib, Jackson," Lew said. "Norman Mailer baloney."

"Katherine has a thing for Mailer. She says he's a part Jew, the same as her."

"As she," Lew said.

"Okay, Professor."

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"And Mailer is all Jewish. All Brooklyn."

"I know what she means. He's Jewish but doesn't really care to be."

"And your wife?"

"You don't know what it's like to live with a midwestern Wasp woman who thinks the sun rises and sets on New York Jewish intellectuals and writers."

"A pretty good group, all in all," Lew said.

"FANTASTIC!" Jackson cried out. "Who's going to argue with Delmore Schwartz or Bernard Malamud or Lionel Trilling . . . ? I can't argue, BUT I CAN'T BE ONE OF THEM, EITHER!"

"Take it easy, Jackson . . . "

"I do, I do, that's the trouble. Real easy. My style is light and I am not filled with *angst* . . . "

"What is angst?" Lew asked. "I see it printed all the time and I never think to look it up."

"Don't worry—you've got plenty. It's just the German word for anxiety with a capital A. Which doesn't mean that *only* Jews have it." No culture without anxiety. "We had culture," Jackson said. "My father, Insurance Man, Canadian Goy, but we were poor. Jews don't have a monopoly on poverty, you know."

"You were talking about culture." Lew was wary now.

"Before stereo, before hi-fi, we had a phonograph—a shabby street in Vancouver but we had chamber music records. My parents bought sets of Dickens and Mark Twain from the local newspaper with coupons, book by book. Sunday afternoons, Schubert's C Major Quintet blooming in the air, me as confused as any Jewish adolescent intellectual . . . masturbating as much as Philip Roth . . . "

"This is some club you feel so left out of," Lew said.

"Only since Katherine. I came to New York. She came to New York. But it was different."

"All immigrants."

"But she came looking for her Jews."

"No shortage here. They thin us out a lot, most other places."

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"It hurts, Lew, being married to a woman who has energy and talent and who thinks I'm some Canadian variety of white bread."

"Is it true? Are you?"

"No! There've been times when I thought I was going insane . . . "

"That's good. Check one."

"Times when I thought I'd written something pretty damned fine."

"Check two," Lew said. "But you may just have it all backwards. What you need to qualify are times when you thought you were the only sane person in the world."

Jackson shook his head, hopeless.

Lew went on. "Times when you thought you'd written the worst piece of *drek* ever put on paper?"

"No."

"Sorry, Jackson," Lew says, solemn. "You're just a little too comfortable in your skin."

"I've written twelve books. Okay, edited . . . "

"Forget it!"

"I had a poem in *The Hudson Review* when I was a senior at Yale."

"No dice."

"I don't drink—hardly at all."

"Give it up!"

"What's the matter, Lew. You think I'm too dumb?"

Lew clutches his forehead. "Are you kidding?" he says. "Do you know how many words there are in Yiddish for a dope?"

"No idea."

"A million. Did you ever hear of a *yutz*?"

"No."

"A *yold*?"

More astonishment. "No!"

"You see what a sheltered life you've had. A *schmuck*?"

"That one I know."

"Not fair. That's in the language by now. How about a *naar*?"

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"A what?"

"Drop it, Jackson. If you knew them all, it wouldn't make any difference. Frankly, even if you were Jewish, you wouldn't be Jewish."

Jackson is dazed by how close to the bone this discussion of his fate has come. Katherine found, Katherine lost; the shadow-Jew he could not be . . . He murmurs, "You don't know how it hurts . . . "

"Pain I know," Lew says. "Everybody has pain. But you have to face it, my friend. YOU ARE AT EASE IN ZION."

Jackson stood up. In spite of his sober claims, the floor was unsteady.

"I'm sorry," Lew said. "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

Jackson groped for the suitcase he'd brought with him. "Listen, Lew, I'm worrying about more than hurt feelings. This is life and death. I'm not fighting what's been going on here. I can't. So, I guess I'm joining it." He threw an arm wave at the coatroom.

"Joining or resigning?" Lew says.

"Listen, I've got a deadline for an anthology of Chasidic love poems for Dodd Mead."

At Lew's quizzical look he offers, "It's a dirty job but somebody's got to do it. It means library research hours, xeroxing, editing . . . I can't afford a housekeeper to take care of Tulip and I never even know where Katherine is any more."

He stands up and starts an odd retreat toward the revolving door. He pauses to finish his tea and puts it on an empty table. Myrna appears from behind her barrier and scoops it up—an excuse to be close to the action, nothing more.

"We love Tulip and she's been thriving here, so . . . "

He thrusts the suitcase in the general direction of his audience, which now includes Myrna, Lew, Krasner behind the cashier's cage, and Sasha, whose innocent outstretched arms finally receive the gift.

Lew finds a few words. "But how long—?"

"Well," Jackson said. He was at the door now. "After this I have to do a collection of Vietnam War jokes for North Point

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Press . . . " The visit was over, leaving Myrna and Sasha to sort through the baby clothes and one pair of grown woman's panties stuck in by mistake.

Later that afternoon, when Katherine Eudemie brought Tulip in, Myrna handed her the intimate item, tactfully placed in a Lord & Taylor shopping bag someone had left. Katherine Eudemie looked at it with a secret smile and said nothing.

Myrna was exultant.

The child!

Her clothes!

Permission from the father!

Everything was coming up Tulips!

One day in late September Myrna returned from the bathroom to find a small crowd clotting the area near the coatroom.

Arbut Blatas, one of the Old Guard Regulars and the man who had painted the murals on the RR walls, had taught Tulip to say goodbye in Russian (*das vedanya*) and was in the process of teaching her the prologue to Pushkin's *Ruslan and Ludmilla*. Tulip spoke the sounds smashingly, "like a darlink Russian parrot," Blatas said admiringly.

A number of patrons lingered, unpaid checks in hand, to listen to the little girl repeat Russian poetry. Normally this would irritate Krasner; processing checks was his job. But this afternoon he was a Cheshire cat. His smile hovered blessing the little comedy in progress.

Myrna got the message. Only a few minutes before, she and Krasner had been kicking around the work situation, present and future, gloom and doom. Then, in a few swift taciturn Krasner-like images he had sketched out Operation Tulip. The word would be spread about the kid in the hat-check room; people would tell each other; it would give curious New Yorkers and naive out-of-towners a rooting interest in coming—like a mascot on a football team. He didn't actually say all this because there was not an appropriate quotation in blank verse for him to use, but Myrna got the idea.

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"You're crazy," she said.

"Never mind," Krasner said. "I know a hawk from a halvah when the wind is North."

"I thought you were so worried about Captain Kolevitch finding out."

"One step at a time."

"You're crazy," Myrna said. "You can't use a kid to increase business."

Krasner didn't think much of this. "All grown-ups use kids for something. See Shaw—preface to *Misalliance*."

Myrna had turned away in confusion. Now she told Tulip, "You shouldn't say things you don't understand."

Scornfully, Tulip said, "*Das vedanya* means goodbye. In Russian. Mr. Blatas says a child can learn to speak a lot of languages."

Myrna shut up.

Krasner counted the house.

Then the real craziness began.

Katherine Eudemie came to the restaurant, without Tulip, looking for Myrna who was menstruating at the time and depressed. Always she had been sad at that time of the month. Later, when the two women were walking in Central Park, Myrna confided that she'd heard women were sad at that time of the month because they were mourning the loss of the birth possibility and Katherine said, "Crap" (like many of her women friends she liked to talk tough even though none of the men they liked talked that way). "I never believed that stuff. That's only literature."

"I would have thought biology," Myrna said. "But I never took either." That was when Katherine Eudemie made the offer of payment. "No, no don't look so horrified. It's not for helping to take care of Tulip. That would be like paying you for baby-sitting. You really care about Tulip. No, this is a genuine bribe."

"For what?"

"If Mr. Eudemie asks about Tulip spending a lot of time

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with you at the RR, just say—well, you can say the truth—that I've given you money for that. That it's not accidental or strange or anything."

Myrna laughed. They crushed dry leaves underfoot as they turned south back towards the park exit. It was chilly. Myrna's mind was a jumble. Depression was gone—so much for menstruation mythology. She decided not to tell Katherine Eudemie that her husband knew all about it; that he was now an accomplice, having added a suitcase full of Tulip's clothes to the conspiracy.

She said: "Here's what I'll do. If I take your money I won't say anything. But if I don't—and I won't—I'll be glad to tell your husband you *are* paying me to take care of Tulip. Okay?" Such are the deals made by everyday craziness. Katherine recognized the logic and instantly accepted it.

The two women strolled through the September light, still a sort of straight sunshine, not yet the slanting light of winter.

"What do you imagine is actually happening?" Katherine Eudemie asked.

"Oh, I'm beyond imagining," Myrna said. "I'm just grateful for Tulip."

"Do you see what I'm doing as something mad?"

"I see it as a . . . gift."

"In other words you're thinking about your own life; not mine, not Tulip's mother's . . . "

"I suppose I should be ashamed at my selfishness. But I'm too desperate for that."

Katherine looked at the young woman. "You too," she said. "Is it possible that every woman I meet these days is desperate?"

Myrna said she didn't know. She could only describe her own situation . . . lost . . . the sense of time having almost run out . . . herself grateful for a new, inspiriting career: Tulip-raising.

"If anyone should be ashamed, it's me," Katherine Eudemie said. "You're helping. I'm doing an imitation of being helpless."

They were at the park playground. Puerto Rican children

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climbed all over the statue of Alice in Wonderland. The day became noisy.

"*Is* it an imitation?" Myrna asked. "Or can you really not help doing it?"

"I don't know," Katherine Eudemie said. "There's so much masquerade in my life, anyway. All I know is when I needed someone—and I didn't even *know* I needed them—you were there. I've never been too good at having friends. Emerson says the way to have a friend is to *be* one. And I've had and lost so many—I . . . " She was speeding now, as she did a lot these days. "Do you have many friends?" she asked.

"No," Myrna said. "Not right now."

"Friends were such a comfort when I was a youngster."

"Me too," Myrna said. "Actors are always with friends—hanging out at coffee shops." She sighed a memory. "Whenever I smell coffee that's bitter from reheating I think of friends." Katherine Eudemie fixed Myrna with a stare that made Myrna nervous.

"I've been on the move so much," Katherine said. "My only friends have been my ambitions. I had an older man who guided me in Chicago—but we were lovers, so . . . And then I came east. I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING WITH MYSELF BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE."

"I understand that," Myrna said, uneasy.

Katherine Eudemie grabbed her hand; on an impulse she held it to her lips.

"Can we be friends?" she said.

Myrna did not know where to look until she got her hand back. Then she said, "I don't really understand what's going on." And began to cry. Short quiet sobs. Katherine Eudemie held her until she stopped. Then they walked on talking and listening.

Myrna felt her life had all been a waiting game in which nothing added up to much until Tulip. There was no explaining why Tulip was the answer, since the question was so unclear. But there it was! Tulip was what had happened. It was as complicated and as simple as that. But that was the one thing you couldn't tell the child's own mother. Impossible to

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discuss the surprises of Tulip with her own forgetful lost mother, Tulip so found, her mother so lost. For a moment Myrna felt she loved Katherine Eudemie the way she loved Tulip. But it was only for a moment.

It had been spring when Katherine Eudemie's copy of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* had been forgotten; now it was fall.

Fall also brought an offer from Paul to buy out Lew's share of the RR.

"I'll keep paying that fat philistine forever before I'll give him a crack at this restaurant," Lew yelled into the phone. "Ask him if he'd like smaller bills so they'll fit better."

"Hey," the lawyer said. "Hey."

"Or maybe your client could lend me some money without interest just for auld lang syne?"

"Hey," the lawyer said. "Hey."

Myrna's obsession with Tulip grew with each passing parapraxis. But now it was split between kid and mother. Myrna read Katherine Eudemie's novel, *The Country of The Young*. She thought she'd never read such a beautiful book. Why, she wondered, wasn't it famous? Sometimes, when business was slow, she read passages aloud to Tulip, informing her that it was her mother's book.

"She did that before I was born," Tulip commented, placing the work in correct literary-historical perspective.

Myrna also ran after dogs because Tulip ran after dogs. Lew didn't mind. He hated dogs in his restaurant. She also ran after cellos because Tulip did. (There were more such to worry about in the RR than there were dogs.) Both dog-owners and cellists were charmed by Tulip and Myrna was made happy.

Krasner was livelier than usual, too. Operation Tulip was starting to work. The actor put together pages of numbers, hand-crampingly compiled, B.C. (Before Computers.)

"Lunches are up," he called out.

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But when the afternoon light began to slant, when Tulip arrived wearing purple mittens and a matching wool scarf, bad news about Katherine Eudemie began to seep into the RR.

Someone mentioned sickness, someone else spoke of a diagnosis; someone even more else mentioned another diagnosis. Lew understood Jackson Eudemie's ambiguous but grim remarks the day he'd brought Tulip's clothes in. From the way things had run Myrna expected something psychiatric. After all—forgetting a child, even once! . . . But fifty-six times!

What was needed was a confirmed diagnosis!

One such came from Joe Larrabie, Lew Krale's personal surgeon. Yes, Lew had such an animal. Not for himself, but for the regulars who needed medico-surgical advice. Not for Lew was the usual, "Ask your doctor." The RR was a complete life-support system, not just a restaurant. Hence, Doctor Joe Larrabie with his own practice and his own table just at the entrance to the dining room.

It was Larrabie who passed along the awful diagnosis of cancer. He glanced around as he hissed the terrifying middle sibilant. By chance, neither Myrna nor Tulip were on the premises.

Only Lew and sly old Sasha heard Joe. The old Russian woman swallowed the fearful word with the stolid acceptance of age.

"*Boijemoy*," she muttered; a familiar Russian incantation of woe to come and woe remembered.

Fatalism, okay! But what Imp of the Perverse made Sasha tell Myrna when she came on the next afternoon?

Sasha tells Myrna.

Myrna, despairing, tells Krasner.

Krasner's first thought is: Jackson Eudemie. He assumed Jackson brought the suitcase full of Tulip's things knowing she needed a new home, soon to be motherless. "I know Jackson Eudemie," Krasner says, jowled with suspicion, "from the old days. Once a hanger-on, always."

Lew butted in. "You think Jackson's laying off his kid on us? Crazy!"

Krasner nods, rabbinic. "Everybody should be so crazy.

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Books and poetry, but he lives." In Krasner shorthand this translated as: anybody who can actually make some kind of living by putting together anthologies of Chasidic love poems isn't so looney.

Myrna's heart slowed down in terror. Maybe Krasner was right. Not only the girl's father but even her mother must have known all along that they had an imminent orphan on their hands. Myrna remembered the fall afternoon Katherine Eudemie had sought her out offering her money and confiding her life story and her terrifying lapses of memory.

Parapraxis my ass! Myrna murmured. (Perhaps the first time in history the first and third word had ever been used in a single sentence.)

Katherine Eudemie's impending mortality changed everything. An impromptu Educational Planning Commission was set up. Music, Art, Dance, these were easy to come by at the RR. But what of Science, what of English, what of Math? Lessons were needed. But, for example, which—the New Math or the Old? There were so many issues to be decided. Being a parent was no easier when there were a dozen parents instead of the usual two.

Then, shortly after the terrible gossip circulated as fact, Myrna became a prisoner of her new obsession. Her insides moved in calligraphic certainty. The message was as clear as if the entrails of a chicken were spread out before a medieval rabbi: a childless destiny. There was no evidence; no cysts, no spotting; only an obsessive sense of permanent internal decay. The abortion sponsored by Sheffield and endured by her was much on her mind. Such events were permanent judgments, she decided. It had sealed her fate. She was so convinced she told no one.

The result was: Tulip became Myrna's last chance. The kidnapping which later astonished everyone was now inevitable. Thus were born future *New York Post* headlines:

ACTRESS SNATCHES KID FROM POSH RESTAURANT

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NOVELIST MOM MAKES POIGNANT PLEA FROM HOSPITAL BED

The first heavy snow brought to New York the Asian flu type B and Russian refugees of all types. One of them was Yuri Yevshenkowitz, a skinny chain-smoker from Moscow University, formerly a professor on the verge of a breakthrough paper in topology and now a waiter at the RR.

"Chulip," Yevshenkowitz said, "a/x times the square + = is how you arrive at the answer. I hed a student in Moscow half your age. Well—"

"Tell me again," said Tulip who had not even departed from the question.

Myrna watched in despair.

"*Eh, maintenant*," the small bald man said to Tulip, "*Il faut que tu fasses ton leçon pour le jour. Repeter, Les sanglots longue des violons . . .*"

"*Les sanglots longue des violons . . .*" Tulip murmured in perfect imitation.

"Harold," he said, "*elle a une bonne oreille*."

"Eugene," Clurman said, "isn't she a little young for Verlaine?"

"*Jamais, trop jeune pour Verlaine*," Ionesco said. He was in town for rehearsals of a new play and Clurman thought it would be nice for Tulip to start learning another language besides Russian. After rehearsals Ionesco would get slightly tipsy and start teaching. Once Clurman caught him in an error of grammar. Ionesco replied, "I am a Rumanian. We are not fanatics of grammar as are the French." They were cheery sessions. No one had told either of them about the condition of Tulip's mother.

"The elongated sobs of the violins of autumn wound my heart," Tulip recited happily in French. She bowed and the entire bar area applauded.

Myrna watched in despair.

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The day that Captain Kolevitch came for lunch, Tulip was in the kitchen learning how to make Chicken Kiev. She didn't feel too well, but she didn't want to spoil her first cooking lesson. And she didn't want them to have to summon Myrna from the front.

"Congratulations," Lew said. "It's Wednesday. The Siberian Pelmeny is terrific, today."

"Nu, Lew," Kolevitch said. "It's been a while."

"What's this 'nu'? You're not Jewish. I'm Jewish! You're of Ukranian anti-semitic derivation."

"That's what made this country great. All of us living together. The place has changed."

"Yeah. We put Christmas decorations on the ceiling."

"I meant something much more profound. All these new faces."

"Which? What new?"

"Lew, I know this territory. Don't forget I wrote six unproduced plays before I decided to give it up and become a policeman. And two of them were as good as anything your snotnose off-Broadway scribblers are doing today. So I know."

"Know what?"

"I know that the place is full of agents, suddenly. There's Sam Cohn, there's Flora what's-her-name? ICM, CAA, the restaurant is lousy with acronyms. Movies, plays. Also, Woody Allen has been seen here."

"Don't talk like a cop, Kolevitch. It's not a crime to be seen here."

"I was just making a point. It's different. It used to be hangers-on, schleppers. Emigré Russians, out-of-work actors."

"They're still here. I'm proud of their loyalty."

"Where are they?"

"Well—not at lunch so much. More late night." A waiter appeared.

"Can I get the Captain a drink before lunch?"

"I'm in uniform, schmuck. That means I'm on duty. Get me a water glass with vodka and some ice in it."

"Captain Kolevitch will have the Pelmeny, Pierre," Lew said. "Make sure it's hot. And a double scotch for me."

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"You see," Kolevitch said.

"See what?"

"What kind of a Russian name is Pierre? Where's Gregory?"

"HE'S OFF TODAY. MY GOD. And Pierre was in *War and Peace*!"

"That reminds me," the policeman said. "Now there's the publishing crowd. Royalty conversations, paperback deals. Very chic, very in. No empty tables." He tossed back a quick swig of water/vodka.

"Come back on a Monday. What the hell are you nudging me about?"

"We had a tip about the kid in the restaurant, Lew. But that kitten has been out of that bag for some time."

"What kitten? What bag?"

Lew covered his confusion with scotch. Kolevitch sipped his on-duty vodka like water.

"Lew," the policeman said. "Everybody knows about Operation Tulip."

"What operation?"

"How this kid is living in the restaurant—how you're taking care of her and she's taking care of you. You can't hide such a spectator sport. It's not good, Lew."

"It's not true, either!"

Kolevitch tossed off the rest of his vodka and signalled Pierre for more.

"We have a statement," he said. "Your hat-check girl has a boyfriend. Had. He turned you in. The kid's name is"—pause to consult small notebook—"Tulip Eudemie."

"Aha!" Lew said, "Is that a real name? Tulip. A dumb story."

But he was defeated. He drank two glasses of scotch before saying another word.

"This place," Kolevitch said, his mouth full of veal dumplings, "it means a lot to me."

"Yeah . . ."

"A shrine to my youthful hopes."

"You couldn't write," Lew said. "Somebody said you looked like Saroyan in your mustache so you wrote plays."

"Don't piss on my youth."

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"Don't threaten my restaurant with anonymous informers."

"Not anonymous. Name is Sheffield." Another glass of vodka vanished. In desperate distraction Lew said, "How's your poor Helen?"

Kolevitch shook his head, hopeless.

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"She'll never get straightened out. She sang her song and now she's lost the tune."

"Those Laughing Academies are awful," Lew said, hoping for a reprieve if not a full pardon. "They could kill the song in a nightingale."

"And you should know what they cost."

The two middle-aged men lean over the plates of soup and sour cream in the middle of the table, wrung by their separate griefs.

"I'm happy for the turnaround, Lew, and for you," Kolevitch says. "But it cannot go on. A child cannot live on premises where liquor is sold. Not in my precinct."

In the kitchen Tulip finally succumbs to the violence of her stomach cramps.

"I'm sick," she cries out.

Someone scoops her up; someone else runs to find Myrna. Diarrhea no longer waits, like God, in the wings.

In front, Captain Kolevitch wobbles to his feet and searches for the headwaiter. Questioning is imminent.

"Kolevitch," Lew calls out, " I swear I have never done anything illegal in my entire life except maybe adultery. Wrong, yes. Illegal, no! NOBODY LIVES HERE. THIS IS A RESTAURANT."

Myrna, in her finest role, wearing a borrowed Persian lamb coat, strolls past, hiding a gray-faced Tulip under the fur. It is as close to being pregnant, again, as she has been able to manage in her young life. She revolves through the door. Outside she grabs Tulip by the hand and races for her apartment and the bathroom.

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Kolevitch finally corners Misha.
Terrified of Cossacks, Misha tells everything.

Lew Krale still remembers Christmas coming that year in New York, blessing everything with snow, remembers the immense snowy sadness hanging over the entire world, able to think of nothing but finding Tulip, and of her mother in Mt. Sinai Hospital. He took to walking the cold streets flirting with his old friend, failure, in its most extreme forms—death by walking in December without an overcoat, death by not looking both ways when crossing Fifty-third Street. One midnight, in a parking lot on Broadway, he howled to the sky, "Bring her back, God, Myrna, whoever. Don't do this." Nobody noticed.

As a gesture of hope or exhaustion he left up the Christmas decorations, the gold streamers and the red balls surrounding the lights in the dining room. I'll take them down when Tulip is back, he thought.

The long drought was over at the RR; apparently the change was permanent. First lunches, now dinners were up—and stayed up. The same new fancy media types Kolevitch had anatomized in his merciless way were there to stay. And Lew was denied even the pleasures of his long romance with failure. He didn't need the acerbic style of Krasner to tell him it had all been bullshit, a pose, a parody of his Russian-Jewish grandparents. His muttered "What does it all mean?" had lost all conviction because it was no longer rhetorical. Now he wanted an answer!

None came. The small band of regulars, who had drifted away, returned. From New Year's Eve on they took turns, as if the restaurant was a place of mourning, arriving shortly before closing time: Clurman after writing a theater review, Balanchine after a performance at the City Center; actors who would have gone to Sardi's for a drink and home to bed sat up instead with Lew . . . the comedians who had gone on to better things came back for the bad times . . . Krasner returned to the scene of his crime and told and retold Operation Tulip . . . the musicians just back from a tour came for

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hot tea with preserves in the Russian style . . . even Paul Buchalter suspended hostilities to sit silently at the mourner's table . . . Joe Larrabie came with medical bulletins: Katherine Eudemie's life was dwindling down in a room at the Guggenheim Pavilion which Jackson Eudemie could not afford.

All through the beginning of the new year they re-rehearsed the scene when Kolevitch had come back with a search warrant and two other cops the day after his lunch with Lew. They'd searched. They'd sought out Lew who no longer had to lie in the awful absence of Tulip and Myrna. The next target was the headwaiter, since Misha had spilled everything the day before.

The only problem was, Morris was on duty, not his brother. Snotty, sardonic Morris, afraid of nothing and fanatically protective of Lew.

"I never told you anything."

"Don't lie to an officer of the law."

"I never saw you before."

"You're under arrest."

"I'll sue you blind."

Kolevitch took Lew aside. "Look," he said. "I don't want to arrest anybody. We just don't want a kid shacking up in a restaurant in this precinct."

"She's not. Even if she was before, which she wasn't."

"But your headwaiter confessed it all, yesterday. And now he's lying."

"He's not."

"My eyes are not crazy."

Krasner descends, slowly, from his cashier's perch and makes his way through the customers waiting to be seated, those holding numbered checks trying to redeem belongings from a bewildered Sasha and those simply milling around in the excitement of a bust at the RR. Krasner has been in a moody state since the vanishing act. Some think he feels implicated as the author of Operation Tulip; some think he feels bereft but, being Krasner, can not express his feelings about the loss of Tulip because he has no text for it. Everyone watches Krasner take center stage.

He raises his hand; a gaunt messenger in one of the

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Shakespeare Histories. In seconds the place is hushed. Krasner speaks—rather he sings out—his words ringing with conviction:

"Who prosecutes innocence, persecutes all;
Who nurtures wrong,
Stifles song,
Mocks justice and repeats the Fall."

Lew Krale and Kolevitch turn towards him, silent mouths open.

"Let no one speak for the child we saw
But caring Mother,
Significant Other,
And least of all, false-caring Law."

Several people holding coats sit down at the nearest booths even if occupied by equally startled customers in the middle of their lunch. Morris whispers to Lew, "What play is that from?"

"Ssshhh."

"We serve this world by marrying danger:
Here the child was saved,
Now safety's waived—
Seek her alive in places stranger."

"Does he know where she is?" Kolevitch murmurs.

"That's not what he said," Lew replies.

"Punishment's not your rightful role;
Rescue's nearer the heart and soul.
To love and take is only human.
The secret lies with tormented woman."

"Oh, my God," Kolevitch says, "It's another frustrated mother baby-snatching."

In the turmoil that follows, Kolevitch and his cops rush out to start a kidnapping alert. Tall, central, calm, an eye in a storm, Krasner greets the man in the Chesterfield coat and homburg who hands him his card.

"You are very good," Kermit Bloomgarden says. "I'm casting *Henry the Fourth* . . . "

"Pirandello or Shakespeare?" Krasner asks.

". . . *Part One*. You have a big style. You're going to have

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a big career." The producer smiles. "If you don't call me, I'll call you. At least I know where to find you—for now." Krasner is beyond irony for the moment. As if sleepwalking he recites, "I'll address your business, my good Lord, hard upon the hour."

"My good Lord," Sasha breathes. Krasner has finally done an audition!

Applause rolls from table to table, led by Pierre and the other waiters who have long since given up on Krasner's acting career. Bloomgarden makes his exit and Lew thinks mournfully that if his mother was still alive she would come in and handle the cash register until he finds a new cashier.

Krasner bows, dripping sweat, eyes bulging, catatonic; a star!

The disappearance of Myrna and Tulip spoke to everyone differently. It roused Kolevitch to rage; it spoke poignantly as an absence to the many customers who'd grown used to seeing Tulip's playful education in progress. And it gave Lew a sense of despair so awful, he stopped drinking. As usual, Kolevitch was wrong even though he was right. On arrival at the Eudemie home he was told that Tulip was visiting grandparents in Vancouver. Thus, there was no missing child and no one except RR regulars who would notice Myrna's extra-long absence from the Front.

Furious, Kolevitch questioned everyone. He asked Balanchine about Russian lessons, Blatas about dancing instruction and Yevshenkowitz about French studies. Ionesco had already left town. The cop questioned Misha and Morris three times, though it's not certain that he ever knew he was embroiled in a twin trompe l'oeil. Katherine Eudemie was often in the hospital when he came to call and Jackson's story was steadfast: his daughter had grown to be the pet of the RR, nothing more. Such things happened in these circles.

Kolevitch would have loved to demand to see the child. But his nerve always collapsed. He was, after all, a failed artist, not an achieved one—thus he was afraid to appear foolish in public. After some mutterings about summonses and subpoenas,

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he subsided. Saroyan would have persisted—would have made a grand drama. The captain made brief comedy: Opera Buffa.

And what of the Opera Seria—Myrna and Tulip's flight? No one has the full story. Some late tellings of furnished rooms, of temporary waitress jobs and lots of rooms at the inn; of midnight sweats, of panicked phone calls and last minute hang-ups, of anxiety attacks re scarlet fever or mumps—which turn out to be only a transitory rash or a day's swelling—at these we can only guess.

Pretty good guesses!

What do we know?

First, the RR: We know that the Front was now a Place Of Desolation! Sans Tulip, sans Myrna. And sans Krasner who was *up to his cool snout in Henry the Fourth, Part One*. The back was a Place Of Exaltation. The Operation Tulip boom was apparently permanent. But full tables could not console Lew. He devoted himself to helping Jackson Eudemie pay for Katherine's expensive illness. And to the activities of several private investigators who turned up no leads. Katherine grew thinner and Tulip remained invisible.

Until one day winter broke into spring. Fifty-seventh Street bloomed, plastered with posters of visiting Midwest Symphony Orchestras and the spring crop of recently escaped Russian and Czech violinists, pianists and cellists. New York in the spring grants freedom to everyone.

On April second, on the eighteenth floor of New York Hospital, Myrna appeared. She tried to bring Tulip up with her but the uniformed security guard said no dice and Myrna had to go up alone. The whole floor smelled overripe, sick-sweet, like spring gone wrong. Listen, spring goes wrong sometimes.

"Hello, Mrs. Eudemie . . . "

"Yes? Who?"

"It's me. I'm Myrna Morris."

"Who?"

"Myrna. From the Russian Rendezvous. Please don't yell. There's no need to call for anybody . . . "

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"Oh . . . "

"Tulip's downstairs. They said children are a problem on hospital floors."

" . . . I wasn't going to yell. I don't have the strength. I'm glad to see you, Myrna. Is my baby all right?"

"She's terrific. We're reading *Treasure Island*."

"I knew it. It's stupid and absurd but I knew it. Jackson wanted to call the police but I made him admit that we were as much children as Tulip. We never really took charge of her—all screwed up we are. I suppose desperate people shouldn't have children but everybody has children . . . and you took charge I told him . . . you were not the desperate one . . . you were up to responsibility. I knew from the way you were in the restaurant how grown-up you were with Tulip—a born mother—I'm rattling on—it's not just Tulip coming back, though I'm thrilled—it's the medicine . . . they're giving me some kind of cortisone—and it makes you speed . . . an experimental program . . . they can't cure me but I'm supposed to cure the rest of the human race which is okay with me, though it gives me nosebleeds they can't stop . . . I'm speeding but I'm so glad to see you standing here by my bed with Tulip downstairs where she belongs . . . what made you decide to come back no it doesn't matter please sit down Myrna . . . " And for a few moments Katherine speeds towards making some sense of her life, sad but still sense. She tells Myrna of her mismated childhood heroes, Scott Fitzgerald and Saul Bellow, Willa Cather and Lionel Trilling—an innocent from the dry Midwest enchanted with sea-dreams of the East—how she, Katherine Eudemie, came east for all her firsts: first book, first ocean, first love, first big splash—and then drowned in the long, receding wave of reputation.

Myrna sits, stoned with unwanted information. It has taken all her energy to get to the hospital and she only vaguely knows who these writers are. She expected rage, threats, anything but a literary memoir of regret. She is impatient.

Katherine slows down. "What I remember most is Fitzgerald saying he was a poor caretaker of his talent. Me too. Poor caretaker of everything."

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Myrna cannot take any more. "Listen," she says. "I never really had time to read after I finished school. Just plays, maybe that's why I thought it was so amazing that it was a writer who was leaving me her child—but I don't feel educated or qualified to talk or even listen about Fitzgerald and those. But I did love taking care of Tulip. It got out of hand. All of a sudden I felt as if she was my only chance. I didn't have a part for a year and a half. Nothing! Not even an Equity Library Showcase. Zero! Then Tulip came along. I never understood why. But there she was. I had to tell her a lie when I ran away, that her mother was sick and her father couldn't take care of her and that I'd been chosen to take care of her . . . "

"You were right."

"No, I was crazy. But I want to thank you, Mrs. Eudemie."

"We have the same child. I think you can call me Katherine."

Myrna stumbled on the words, "Katherine—Kath—Katherine," she said. "It's stupid to thank somebody when you take something from them—but thanks."

Katherine then, turning for some reason to lie on her side, speaks to Myrna sitting behind her, passionately, with all the desperate concern for being understood that a patient brings to the discourse of analysis, at certain moments. "I worked and worked on my new career. I knew how sick I was—so I've had a very short career as a lay analyst—about a year. And I've really had one patient: myself. One patient and one major symptom—if you think symptoms are the name of the game and I don't. In spite of that I've been working on the parapraxes—the slips, forgetting Tulip over and over again—but especially the beginning when it was still a single slip—before you and the others got involved . . . and all I could come up with was the old explanations, chewed-over modernist bullshit—the creative spirit turns destructive when it's blocked . . . that I was sacrificing my only successful creation in revenge for screwing up as a writer. Oh, none of it matters except that you were right, Myrna."

Katherine Eudemie turns back and scares the hell out of Myrna by grabbing her and hugging the young woman to her.

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She cries out, "You were right, you were chosen to take care of her . . . take her back . . . take her back . . . go downstairs, take her back and finish reading *Treasure Island.* I trust you. . . ." But while she is telling her to go she is holding on tightly and all Myrna can think of is she has finally gotten her marbles back and brought the kid to her mother who is losing hers.

To make it worse, Katherine Eudemie's nose starts to bleed. This makes for a shocking sight when Jackson Eudemie walks in. He has come to the hospital to visit his wife and found his missing daughter reading a book by Robert Louis Stevenson in the lobby and excitedly brought her up to the room over the protests of security. There is blood all over the sheets and the women are holding each other as if in a death-struggle. Jackson Eudemie plunges to the bed even though he is still holding Tulip.

Myrna was crying out to all of them—and to the nurses who finally heard the uproar and came flying in—"Don't you want to know why I brought the kid back? All you care about is your own goddamn selves not about her." They froze in some hideous, red-speckled, white-sheeted version of Laocoön's struggle.

"I sent her to the store to get some cartons of milk and cereal, stuff like that, and she got all giant sizes and she was wobbling up the stairs, a walk-up in Dover, New Jersey, and when she saw me she said, 'Myrna, help, help Myrna.' And I grabbed the stuff from her and I almost stopped breathing because I got it, I got so clearly that it was over. She never asked for anything before and now I knew we were in trouble and I knew it was over. . . ."

But by this time the nurses who represented the Official World of Help had taken over and the Opera Seria was finished.

Finally it doesn't matter how you got where you are. It matters where you are and where you're going. Katherine went to sleep at last two days later. Tulip, having been away from home

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so long under the cover story of being with her grandparents in Vancouver, actually went to Canada immediately. Finding themselves alone, Myrna and Jackson Eudemie inevitably found each other.

Eleven months later they were married and Tulip came home.

Myrna and Jackson already had little lovers' tricks of wordplay. One of them was this: he would say, Everything begins in lust and she would reply, as they dozed off, Everything ends in sleep. Or she'd say, Everything begins in curiosity, and he'd say, Everything ends in boredom. It was part of his attempt at a literary corruption of Myrna.

Before they decided to get married Jackson accused her of going through with it just to get Tulip after all. What he said was: "Everything begins in planning." And her denial was: "Everything ends in luck."

"I heard you were in love with Lew Krale."

"That was more of my own craziness. It would have been nice."

"It would have been awful. Do you know Lew?"

"He used to ask my advice. I liked that. But it seems to me I was really in love with Katherine."

"Oh."

"She came to see me and we walked in the park. Everything about her—even her troubles—dumping a baby day after day—it all seemed glamorous. I was taking part in a fairy tale. I read her book. I loved that she was a writer."

"Romanticism. You ended up with the editor."

She laughed. "And the child."

It had never occurred to Jackson Eudemie that he would marry again after Katherine died. But that was about as unoriginal as most of his ideas. And if Myrna did marry him for his child, it didn't quite work, since boarding school, college and Tulip's own marriage came, it seemed, in a matter of minutes. Myrna had been prescient about her childless destiny. She could not conceive. Tulip *had* been her last chance.

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What Myrna got was Jackson Eudemie and a small press the two of them operate now, twenty-two years later, from their house in Greenwich, Connecticut.

And what of Tulip? What was she thinking and feeling during all that tumult of attention, of education, of abduction; of being jolted, pulled and pushed to be this or that emblem for the adults in the RR universe? It's interesting to speculate and observe because only a few weeks ago, more than two decades after these events, a reporter for *Time* magazine heard the story at the RR. The intellectual Lindbergh Case with a happy ending was how he sold the story to his editors; and he cornered Tulip, now grown up and a publicist for the Mark Taper Forum and married to a tax lawyer, Reuben Rosenfeld, who also collected first folio Shakespeare.

"Oh, yes," Tulip said. "I remember it all. My mother was agitated and wild, a poet after all. I don't think I knew then what I'm saying now but I knew, somehow! My father, he was something else again: elegant, eloquent, great style and full of love. He could have been a great man in publishing but he wouldn't make the necessary compromises." (Jackson Eudemie would have been astonished at such notions. He knew he was only a hack playing Man of Letters. A harmless game, neither noble nor ignoble. Children are strange: you get either hero-worship or rage, both usually unfounded in real cause.)

"But do you recall how you actually felt? The experience of it? Being raised in the hat-check room of a restaurant?"

Tulip Rosenfeld thought a moment. "I was only four," she said. "I would have liked to have friends. Once a little girl was allowed to stay with me while her parents had tea on a snowbound day, a real blizzard. We sneaked out and threw snowballs at the box office of Carnegie Hall. Her name was Leslie and she had an eye which drifted."

"Wouldn't that be a screen memory? Not something a four-year-old would notice and remember?"

"Maybe."

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"And how could you tell the twin headwaiters from each other when no one else could?"

"It's a knack. Like recognizing shades of color. You just know."

"Weren't you ever frightened?"

"Sometimes I'd be a little *triste* and long for my mother."

"You have some French words. Didn't you study French at the RR with Ionesco?"

"Short? Bald? Drank a lot?"

"Yes."

"That was the one. Listen, this may not be the best time to interview me about this."

"Why not?"

"I'm pregnant. You get big mood swings when you're going to have a baby."

"Ah . . . "

So—here is Tulip, pregnant! Myrna and Jackson call her immediately. Yes, it is true, she says, Reuben and she had been planning to call them with the news. Tulip is as cool and steady as her mother was warm and volatile.

"Everything begins in rumors and ends in babies," Myrna jokes.

"Everything begins in *Time* magazine and ends in reality," Jackson Eudemie replies.

At the cemetery Katherine was waiting. What else was there for her to do?

"Katherine," Jackson said, standing at the foot of her grave. "This is hard to believe but Tulip is having a baby."

"God, Jackson, you're so self-conscious. You could have told me at home."

"It seemed more appropriate here."

"You were always so damned appropriate."

"Listen, I didn't come out to this God-forsaken part of Long Island to have a post-marital argument. I just wanted to tell you you're going to be a grandmother."

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"That's neat."

"Grandmothers don't use words like 'neat'."

"This one does. If I can still be one—or anything. It's not clear, you know."

"I know. I guess."

"How come you never came here before?"

He was silent.

"Is Tulip happy? It's so hard for me to imagine her grown up. And a mother."

"It's hard for me too," he said. "Living doesn't solve anything, you know."

"Neither does dying," Katherine said. "I wish I could go for some therapy and I wish I could finish my novel."

"Me, too," Jackson said. "I'm writing fiction, now. After you died I got tired of compiling anthologies. Myrna thought I should be a real writer. I started a novel. I haven't finished it yet. That was twenty-two years ago."

"Novels are hard," Katherine said.

"I know. I'm back to my old bread and butter. Right now I have an assignment to do a children's version of Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. The research is fascinating."

"My God!"

"I have to make a living."

"Of course. Tell Tulip I'm proud my baby's having a baby."

"You know I can't do that," he said.

"I guess not," Katherine said.

It was chilly and the trek back from the cemetery made Jackson hungry. He went back via Manhattan and found himself at the Russian Rendezvous. It was six o'clock, Thursday evening, fall in New York. All of those things. Standing on the sidewalk in front of the RR, Jackson Eudemie shivered and loved them all passionately at that moment: twilight, midweek, autumn, midtown New York; loved them as you can only love such things right after a visit to a cemetery. He faced east and it was as if the long line of "civilians"—that's what Lew Krale used to call ordinary people with no claim to an art form, whose names would never appear in either *The Hudson*

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Review or *Variety*—it was as if they were all heading up the slight slope of Fifty-seventh Street, all the way from the East River, towards a dinner at the Russian Rendezvous. He saw them all as "going-to-be's" in that twilight hallucination. After all, everyone is en route to something. He was en route to becoming a grandfather and had just come from a conversation in a cemetery. Everyone is hungry for something if only dinner.

Jackson sat in a front booth and ordered a giant meal: *zakuska*—spicy Russian hors d'oeuvres, *borscht*, hot in honor of the first cool fall evening, *karsky shaslik* and tea. By the time he finished, the pre-concert crowd was thick in the front waiting for tables, his included. But when he went to pay the check Jackson found that his wallet had not made it back with him from the graveyards of Long Island.

How embarrassing! He had not seen Lew Krale for a couple of years. Lew was gray and gaunt but with a tranquil air, no longer so frantic. He sipped a Seven-Up and grinned.

"I see you haven't changed, Jackson," he said. "You still can't pay."

"I see you have changed," Jackson said. He waved at the crowd. "You're drinking Seven-Up and I'm the only one who can't pay. I'll send you a check tomorrow."

"Don't sweat it," he said. "I'm up to my ass in checks. Somebody offered to buy me out the other day for three million dollars. I gave him a drink instead."

Jackson told Lew about Tulip getting pregnant and Lew bought them both vodkas. They toasted the impending grandchild.

"Is this okay?" Jackson asked, "You drinking again."

"I can take it or leave it. Since Tulip. That kid changed everything."

Jackson asked him how it felt to be such a grand success. Lew's face went dark.

"Don't make fun of an old friend."

Jackson swore he'd meant it kindly.

"It doesn't feel right," Lew said. "It feels good—but not

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right. You can't change at my age. How about you and Myrna?"

"We're always just getting by. I almost had a best-seller: a book on great teas of the world. But it fizzled out. I'm the only publisher in the world who would try to make a coffee table book out of tea. I'm too old to change."

"Listen," Lew Krale said. "Just not dying young is a kind of success."

"It's a kind of failure, too."

His eyes opened wide: the old Lew. "You think so?" he said, a hint of hope in the question.

On the strength of that question the two of them drank the evening to its end. Jackson called Myrna twice with a revised schedule. The headwaiter changed tables around them three times. At last they began to be a problem. Too noisy, old jokes and memories too raucous, and they ended up climbing over the ledge of the hat-check room.

"It's okay," Lew muttered to the astonished young woman attendant, "this man's kid used to live here." From the inside looking out they surveyed the debris of their lives. The coatroom was three times the size it had been in the Grand Old Period. Lew lay down on the floor, embedded in some of the light topcoats of the season, remembering, aloud, Krasner's moment of dramatic intervention, Tulip's momentous diarrhea.

Drunk and sad, Jackson Eudemie lay down next to Lew. The events of the day made him think of his children's book on Freud which was, as usual, late. It was a small jump from Lew's mumbled memories to thinking about Freud—the Freud of 1887, turning from the bizarre and terrifying discoveries of hysterical, often paralyzed women delivering up the dark twisted truths they'd spent their lives, their balance, their physical health trying to suppress. He thought of that self-named Conquistadore turning from this exotic jungle to the still unexplored jungle of the everyday: the tongue slipping into the repressed expressed wish . . . the umbrella forgotten on a rainy day summing up a life of denial . . .

The Psychopathology of Everyday Life! In his silly little children's book he would describe to the young people of the

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world how the ambitiousness of the title went unnoticed in its familiarity. He thought of Lew Krale drinking himself out of business, saved by Tulip, growing old crucified by success; of Krasner lurking in the forest of his shyness and ego, a hero waiting to happen to his own drama. He thought of all of these, and most of all of his first wife, Katherine Eudemie. She'd come to New York to be a writer like Lionel Trilling, Delmore Schwartz, Bernard Malamud—the great shadow-Jews of her Midwest imagination. She'd come to contribute and willy-nilly she had contributed.

She'd come to New York for grandeur and forgot what she came for. *Parapraxis Found* was her most lasting work and she'd ended up helping to save Lew Krale's dying restaurant . . . had written instead of the Great Jewish/Goyish Novel a chapter in the history of a cafe; the Necessary Place where those with a song to sing rest their voices in gossip and laughter. It was the dream of artistic achievement writ small, not in ink but in caviar and canapes.

Thus go most dreams when they encounter the Psychopathology of Everyday Life. Remembering all this he began to laugh, not unkindly, and Lew joined in with a loose, wet laugh creating the kind of ruckus the place had not heard or seen in years.

"How'd you get home?" Myrna said.

"Lew lent me some money. It was like the old days. Go to sleep."

But before they slept he told her about the crazy evening. He left out the cemetery part; told her everything else, though, including the drunken sprawl with Lew Krale in the hat-check room. He felt old and happy and unreasonably pleased with the past.

"I hope Tulip appreciates being pregnant," Myrna said. "I wanted that so much."

"Yes. Everything begins in passion and hunger," Jackson Eudemie said.

"I was never a mother and now I'm going to be a grandmother," Myrna murmured. "Everything ends in comedy," she said and went back to sleep.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

T. Coraghessan Boyle has written three novels, most recently *World's End*, which won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction in 1987. His third collection of short stories, *If the River was Whiskey*, is forthcoming from Viking. He lives in Woodland Hills, California, and is a professor at the University of Southern California.

Denis Johnson was born in Munich and lives in Northern California. He is the author of two volumes of poetry, three novels, and a forthcoming collection of short stories. His first novel, *Angels*, won the American Academy of Arts and Letters' Sue Kaufman Award for First Fiction in 1984.

Joyce Carol Oates is the author most recently of *American Appetites*, a novel, and *The Assignation*, a collection of short stories. She lives and teaches in Princeton, New Jersey, where she helps edit *Ontario Review*.

Edna O'Brien has written five collections of short stories, nine novels, and several plays for stage and screen. Her most recent book is *The High Road*, a novel (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). She lives in London.

Daniel Stern is the author of nine novels, a play, and numerous essays and short stories. He has been, at various times in his career, a professional cellist, a professor at Wesleyan University, and the head of advertising for a television network and a major motion picture company. He is the Director of Humanities at the 92nd Street YMHA in New York, and his collection of short stories, *Twice Told Tales*, will be published this spring by Paris Review Editions.

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INTERVIEWS

Elisabeth Sifton is a senior editor at Knopf.
Mira Stout has written for *Vanity Fair*, the *New York Times*, the *Spectator* and the *Financial Times*. She lives in London and is currently at work on a novel.

POETRY

James Cummins's book of poems, *The Whole Truth*, was published by North Point Press. He lives in Cincinnati.
Jorie Graham is the author of three volumes of poetry, *Hybrids of Plants and of Ghosts* and *Erosion* (both from Princeton University Press) and *The End of Beauty* (Ecco Press). She lives and works in Iowa City.
Marilyn Hacker's books include *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* (Arbor House, 1986), *Assumptions* (Knopf, 1985), and *Presentation Piece*, for which she received the National Book Award in Poetry in 1975. She has recently completed a new collection, *Market-Day*.
Pamela White Hadas's most recent book is *Beside Herself: Pochahontas to Patty Hearst*, a collection of dramatic monologues in verse. She lives and works in New York City.
Carl Little is an associate editor of *Art in America*. He has published poems in *The Hudson Review, New Directions in Prose and Poetry* and *Frank*. He is a graduate of the Columbia Writing Program and has a masters degree in French from Middlebury College.
Federico García Lorca, one of the greatest Spanish writers of the twentieth century, died in 1936. The poems which appear in this issue were written in Lorca's notebooks between 1920 and 1923 and were first published posthumously. **Jerome Rothenberg**'s eighth book of poetry, *Khurbn and Other Poems*, will be published by New Directions in 1989. Another volume, *The Gematria*, is forthcoming from Sun and Moon Press. He is the editor of numerous anthologies, including *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania* and *Shaking the Pumpkin: Traditional Poetries of the Indian North Americas*. He teaches visual art and literature at the University of California at San Diego.
James Poolos is completing his MFA in the writing program at the University of Iowa.
Lawrence Raab has published three collections of poems, *Mysteries of the Horizon, The Collector of Cold Weather* and, most recently, *Other Children* (Carnegie-Mellon, 1987). He teaches literature and writing at Williams College.

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Bin Ramke is the editor of the Contemporary Poetry Series for the University of Georgia Press, and directs the Writing Program at the University of Denver. His fourth book, *The Erotic Light of Gardens*, will be published by Wesleyan University Press in fall 1989.

Aleksandar Ristović, who was born in 1933, is one of the leading Yugoslav poets of his generation. He has published numerous collections of poetry, as well as books of essays and a novel. **Charles Simic**'s thirteenth book of poems, *The World Doesn't End*, will be published this spring. His translation of a collection of Ristović poems, *Road Meant to Be Walked*, is forthcoming from Charioteer Press. He lives in Strafford, New Hampshire and teaches at the University of New Hampshire.

Brian Swann teaches at Cooper Union and is the director of the Bennington Writing Workshop. He has published collections of poetry, fiction, and poetry in translation, and has edited a number of books on Native American literature.

Charles Tomlinson's most recent books are *The Return* and *Collected Poems. Annunciations* will be published by Oxford University Press in the fall of 1989. He is a professor of English literature at the University of Bristol, an honorary fellow of Queens College, Cambridge, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

Alan Williamson's latest book is *The Muse of Distance* (Knopf, 1988). He teaches at the University of California at Davis.

John Witte's poems have appeared in recent issues of the *Iowa Review* and *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly*. He is the editor of the *Northwest Review*.

ART

Judy Fiskin was born in Chicago in 1945, and currently lives in Los Angeles and New York. Her photographs were recently exhibited at Newspace Gallery, Los Angeles, Otis Art Institute, Los Angeles, and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York.

Stephen Frailey was born in Evanston, Illinois, and lives in New York. His photographs have been included in exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the International Center for Photography, New York, and the National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

Christopher Wool was born in Chicago in 1955, and lives in New York. His paintings have been exhibited recently at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and Luring Augustine Gallery, New York.

Michele Zalopany was born in Detroit in 1955, and lives in New York. Her work has been seen at Hoffman Borman Gallery, Los Angeles, and Massimo Audiello Gallery, New York.

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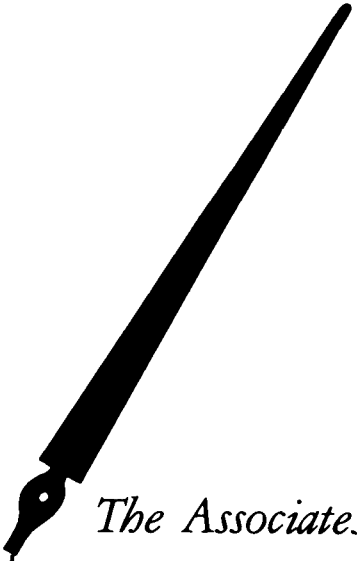

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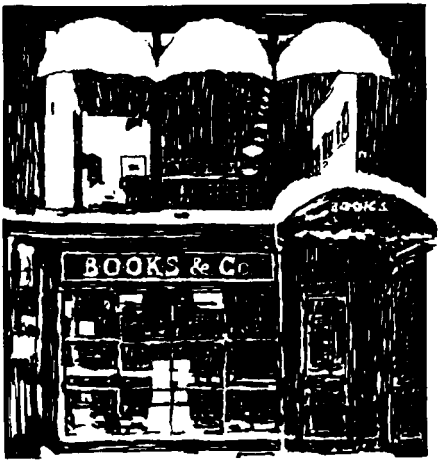

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